

**DISTRICT 8 - LPA Vol. 2 1976 - 1997**

News Clips Creator: Dorothy Gill

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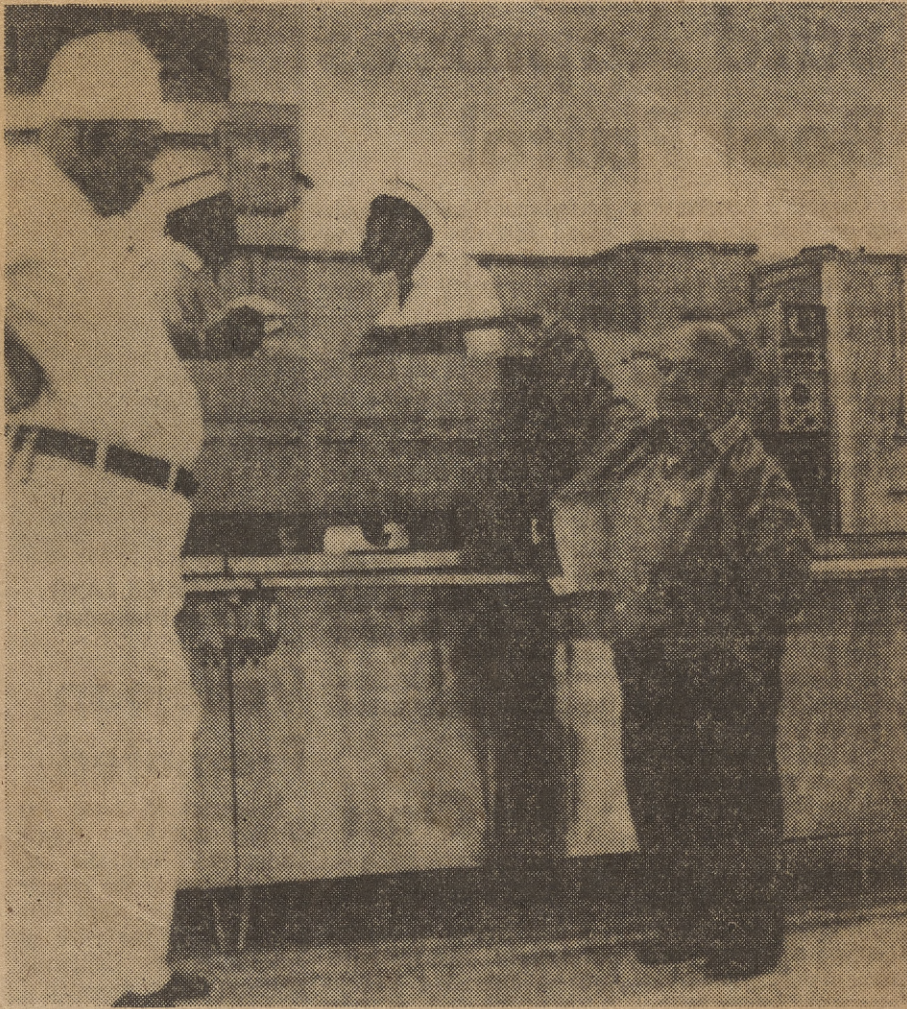


## **Dorothy Gill**

**Dorothy Gill was the mother of two LP sons, Ricardo and Arturo. Both sons were born in Puerto Rico and later moved to New Orleans with their mother.**

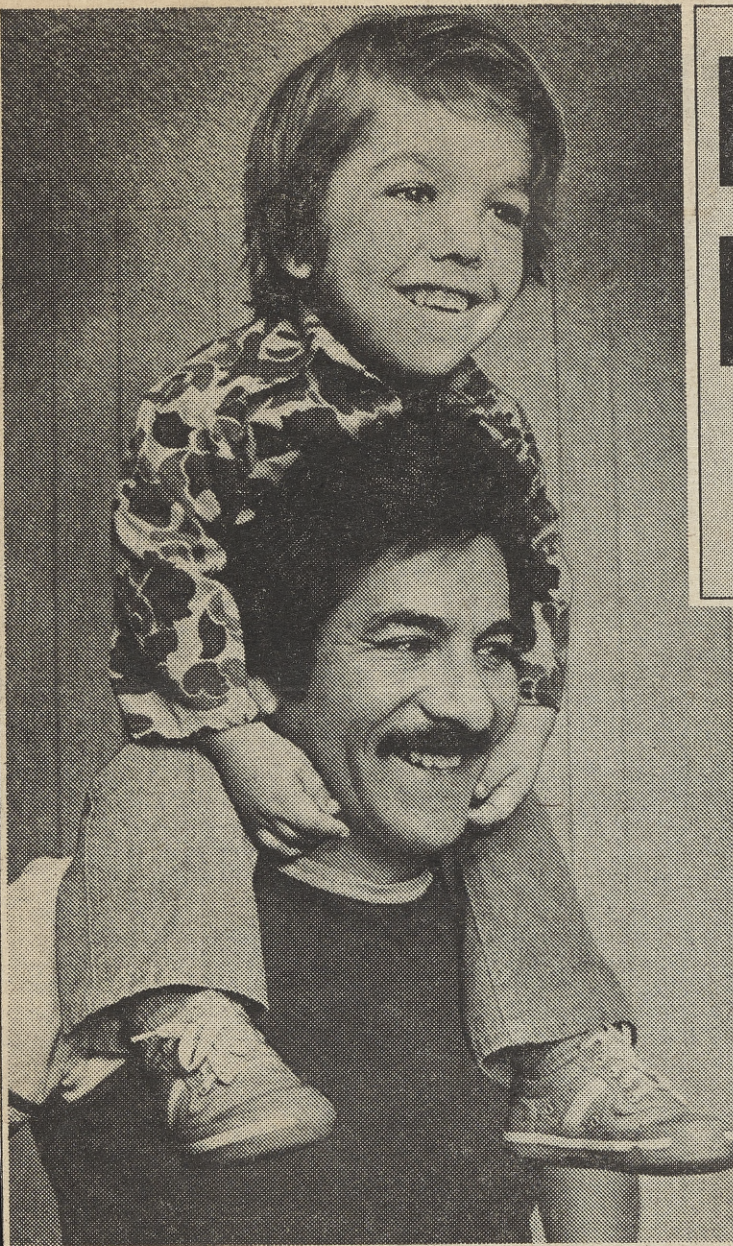
**She and the boys became members of LPA in the 1960's after she met Carol Gracco, DiAnn Locicero and Irwin Noyes.**





### SHORT MAN A ROUGH, TALL WORLD

Jack Jett, 48, is serving sentences in the Tennessee State Prison totaling 24 to 40 years for passing \$4,900 in bad checks. Jett, who stands 53 inches and weighs 129 pounds, is bitter over the sentence he received and prison officials' refusal to permit him to attend the funeral for his wife, who died recently.—AP Wirephoto.



Alex Luna gives his son Brian, 7, a ride on his shoulders. The plucky, dwarf son suffers from a congenital bone disease.

## Loving parents help dwarf son to stand tall

**Tiny Brian Luna has sky-high problems but he's getting an enormous boost in life from his loving and understanding parents.**

The dwarf, 7, is only three feet tall because of a congenital bone disease — yet with his parents' help he has learned to take his place in a normal world.

"We aren't going to shelter Brian and hide him away because that would be the worst thing for him," Luna, 31, told *The NEWS*. "He needs to face life and make the best of his stature. His mother and I just try to smooth the way."

Doctors first told the Lunas about their son's physical problems when he was just 4 months old.

"The main concern was Brian, not us and our shock or grief," Luna said. "We needed to know as much as possible about dwarfism and what our son would go through. People advised us to send Brian to

special schools so he'd be sheltered from the cruel teasing. They told us he'd be retarded."

After years of frustration, the Lunas finally found an organization called Little People of America. The group helped them prepare their son for his special future.

The Lunas sent Brian to a public school where he'd learn to get along with normal-size schoolmates. They introduced their boy to other children who were also dwarfs, and they encouraged his friendship with adult dwarfs who could act as role models. Now they spend many hours each month speaking to other parents of dwarfs and TV and radio audiences.

"I remember the heartache we went through before we knew what to expect," Luna said.

— SUSAN JIMISON





**LITTLE PEOPLE MEET**—Connecticut residents who recently attended the (national) convention of the Little People of America—a group for those under four feet 10 inches high—in Pittsburgh, Pa., are (bottom row, second from left) Miss Sherry Hochstadt of 107 Spring street, president of the group's Connecticut chapter, and (second row, third and fourth from left) Miss Ann Mikos of East Haven and Miss Dottie Mackay of Greenwich.

## Area Delegates at Conclave Of Nation's 'Little People'

Miss Sherry Hochstadt of 107 Spring street, president of the Connecticut chapter of the Little People of America and the local representative, recently attended the group's (annual) convention in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Also attending from Connecticut were Miss Dottie Mackay of Greenwich and Miss Ann Mikos of East Haven.

The organization, which was founded by movie and TV personality Billy Barty in 1960, is made up of persons who are under four feet, 10 inches tall. Children who will also be under the height limit when fully grown may also join.

### Purposes Listed

The group's purpose is to provide fellowship, an interchange of ideas, solutions to the unique problems confronting a little person, and moral support.

To do this, the group schedules frequent district meetings and informal meetings between individuals, distributes district and national newsletters, and has an annual national convention.

From the organization, members are able to get information concerning the best places to obtain clothes, insurance, and other needs. Also provided is information concerning employment opportunities.

### Stress Education

The importance of a good education, especially for the younger members, is strongly stressed by

izes is that others, facing problems similar or worse than his, have made successes of their lives in practically every trade and profession.

This change in perspective and attitude toward the world is often half the battle, and many members report that this was the biggest benefit they derived from becoming members of the Little People of America.

the group. The group also applies strong emphasis in behalf of the proper guidance of member children by preparing them for adulthood.

One of the most important things a new member soon real-





### MAN-SIZED JOB

Six-year-old Sharon Kay Burnett, who is only 34 inches tall, has a man-sized job as she takes her lunch tray from Mrs. Lurlene Cadenhead at Arcadia Park School, 911 N. Morocco. Sharon Kay is so small she has to have a foot rest under her desk, at right, which has a seat only 13 inches high.—Staff Photos by Dirck Halstead.

### 34 INCHES TALL

## Sharon's Littlest First-Grader!

By AL HESTER  
Staff Writer

A little bit of a girl named Sharon Kay Burnett has jumped into the big middle of everybody's attention at Arcadia Park School—although they have to look twice to see her.

Sharon Kay, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ira O. Burnett of 315 S. Morocco, is only 34 inches tall. She weighed 26½ pounds the day she registered for her first-grade classes.

"She's the smallest first-grader we've ever had," Miss Gladys Boren, principal at Arcadia Park School, said.

For Sharon, school is a world inhabited by giants, where her teachers tower above her almost

like skyscrapers and her classmates are a foot higher than she is.

She occupies a tiny desk (the smallest available) which has a seat only 13 inches above the floor. But even this is too big for Sharon Kay. She uses a foot rest so that her feet won't dangle above the floor.

She peers up at a world consisting of the underside of tables and desks and big feet. As a matter of fact she is so small teachers almost didn't see her the first day of school.

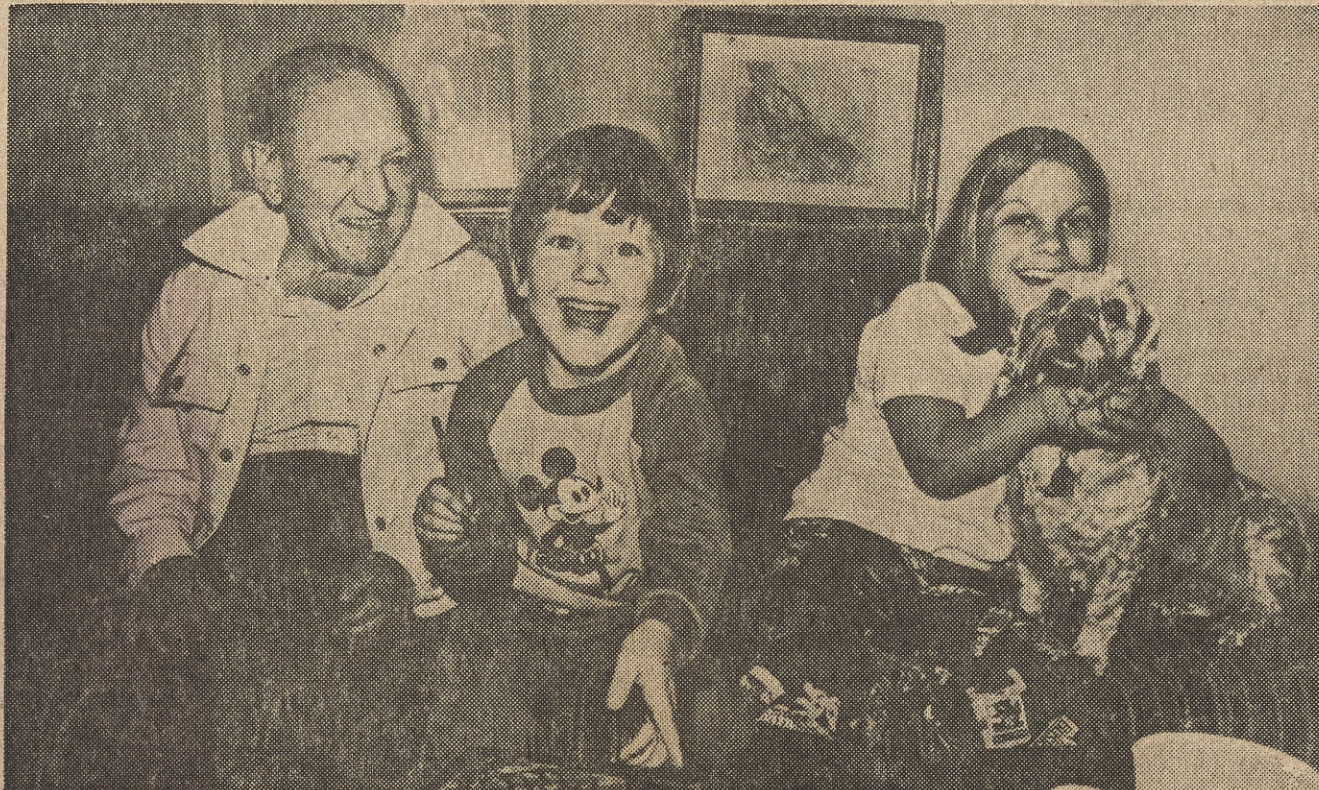
"I took Sharon Kay up to enroll," Mrs. Burnett, herself only 4 feet 11½ inches tall, said. "They asked me where my child was. She was right there by the table. They just couldn't believe she was old enough for school."

#### HOLDS HER OWN

Miss Boren and Sharon's teachers point out that the tiny girl holds her own in her studies. She does a good job on her printing and drawing—better than many first-graders.

Sharon Kay is shy about talking, but she shows a flair for independence which sur-

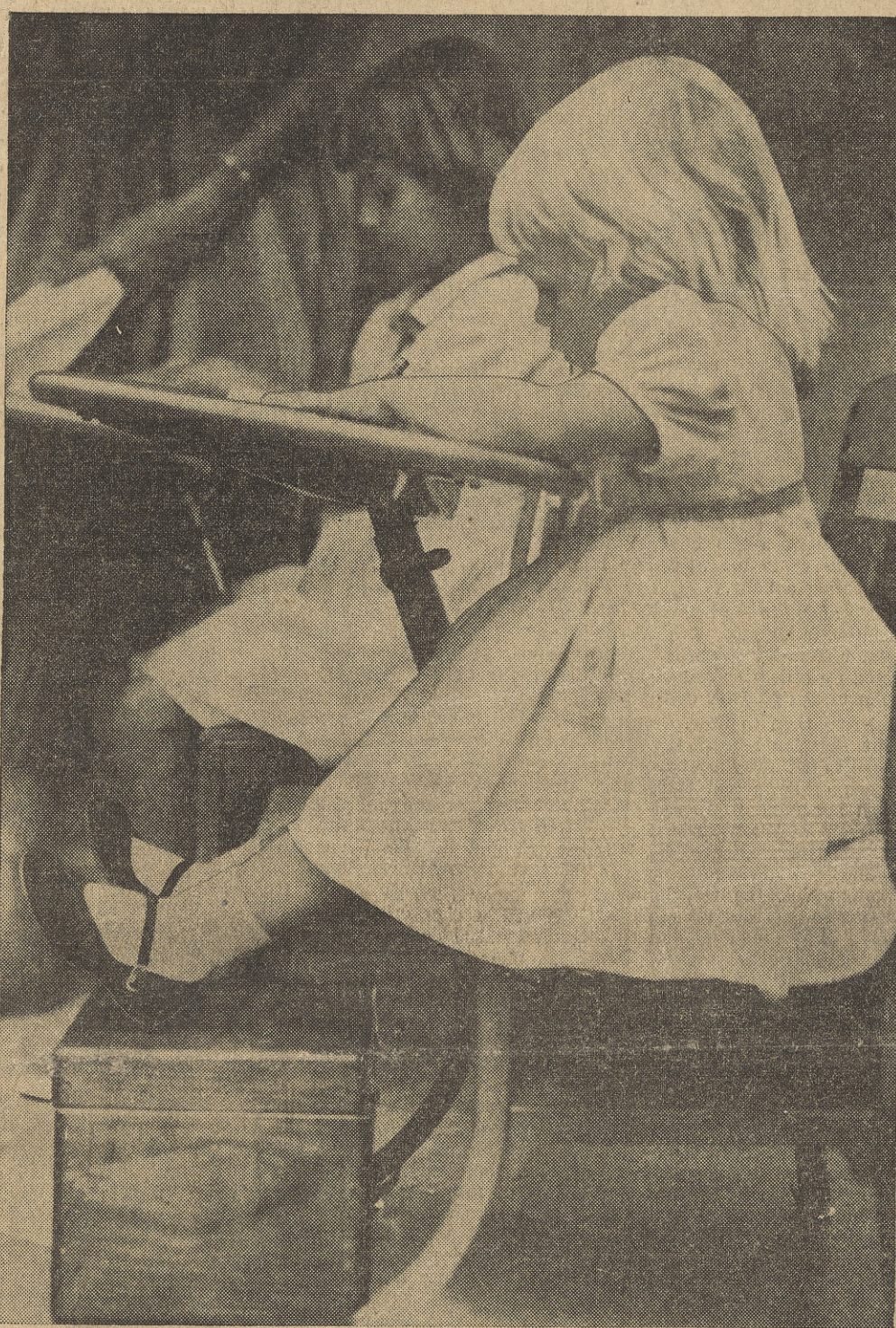
See SHARON on Page 24



ACTOR BILLY BARTY shares a laugh with his son Braden and daughter Laurie while the family dog, Muffin, seems content being hugged. Barty, 3 feet 9 inches tall, has been in movies since he was a child. In 1957, he founded Little People

of America, Inc., "to get together, help ourselves and help each other." Little people (as they prefer to be called), Barty says, are finding "they can use their minds, go to college and get an education and advance themselves in the world."

— L.A. Times-Washington Post Photo.



## Shoots Ex-Husband

DELANO (UPI) — A cocktail waitress Wednesday night pumped .22 caliber bullets into her ex-husband as he stood at the bar and, moments later, was critically wounded herself by a policeman.

Officer Roger Hill said Caroline Gore, 32, had called him to the Stardust cocktail lounge saying her ex-husband had refused to leave.

Hill said he met the woman, a 3½-foot dwarf, in the parking lot but she ran into the bar and shot Charles Gore, 32, at close range. The officer said he followed Mrs. Gore into the bar and felled her after she ignored his command to stop firing.

The Gores were in critical condition at Kern Medical Center in Bakersfield.

### RECOMMENDED READING . . . . .

- Ann Landers in Russia, Page 6-B.
- MPs After Poachers, Page 6-B.
- Red China's First Decade, Page 14-A.



# Small World, Big Problems

By Michael R. Saska  
(A Member of The Star's Staff)

**H**APPINESS is a low elevator button, groceries on a bottom shelf or meeting other little people.

That is happiness if you are less than 4 feet, 10 inches tall and live an adult life eye level with doorknobs, belt buckles and kitchen sinks.

## Grin and Bear It

Chances are elevator buttons will always be beyond normal reach and the groceries inevitably will be on that top shelf. But meeting other little people is an experience made possible through Little People of America, Inc. (L. P. A.).

The organization for persons affected by 75 different types of midgetism and dwarfism was formed in 1960 at a national convention for little people in Las Vegas. Billy Barty, television and movie entertainer, held the first meeting of little people in 1957 and from there the 1960 convention emerged.

In Las Vegas more than 100 persons attended the convention at which a constitution was adopted and the U. S. divided into districts. The groundwork was laid for the incorporation of L. P. A. as a non-profit organization.

Today a dozen districts with chapters in each district hold meetings, provide fellowship and help to find solutions to the problems of 20,000 little people in the U. S.

## More Than Is Obvious

To the normal person the problems of a midget or dwarf may seem small, since a small person eats less, wears less and occupies less space. But it frequently costs the person of little stature more to maintain himself than the average man.

When the little people eat outside the home they order from a regular menu. Although they rarely finish everything they are forced to pay the full price. They must buy custom tailored suits sometimes costing as much as \$140 or be forced to wear children's clothes.

Custom made shoes run beyond \$20 a pair. Custom made chairs, beds, cabinets, etc., reach far above the cost of normal furniture. And reaching the gas and brake pedals of cars without buying extensions is a big transportation problem.

Another problem is adjusting to and accepting the fact that they are small. Little People of America, Inc. is geared to help



ALMOST 4 FEET 2 INCHES TALL, Mrs. Ruth Thomas handles an assembling machine for luggage locks at Donco Manufacturing Co., Inc. Mrs. Thomas is District 7 co-ordinator for Little People of America, Inc., a nation-wide non-profit organization for persons under 4 feet 10 inches tall.

small people make the adjustment through personal example.

L. P. A. and its 800 members are interested in "little" children (named "Little Littles" by L. P. A.). The small children are assured that their problem isn't as bad as they may think and they are given the opportunity to work and play with other children their size.

Mrs. Ruth Thomas, 3636 Wyandotte street, the Missouri co-ordinator of the L. P. A., said District 7, which includes Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, is the fourth largest in growth and progress across the nation. About 40 persons are members in the 4-state area.

Through Little People of

America the tiny adults and the "Little Littles" promote their highest interest in work, sociability, good friendship and mutuality. They learn where to find things such as custom shoes and clothes along with the other necessities to make living in the "big world" more comfortable.

## Aids are Available

Special innovations have been developed to help little people perform daily duties. Besides custom clothes, furniture and car pedals newer additions include a folding extension for reaching those high elevator buttons.

Another extension is equipped with a grasping hook to reach high shelves without the aid of a stool or standing on the shopping cart. And yet another extension is a coin holder designed to deposit dimes in public phones. It also has a hook for lifting the receiver and dialing.

District 7 of the Little People of America, Inc. will hold its annual meeting October 28 and 29 at Hotel Bellerive, 214 East Armour boulevard.



Newlyweds Steve Nerden, 4 feet 2, and his wife, Patricia, 4 feet, say their biggest problem is not their size but finding jobs. — (AP Wirephoto)

## Despite training

# Little people find few jobs

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Steve Nerden hopped onto a sofa with its legs cut off and said the only problem with being 4 foot 2 is getting a job to support your family.

"We don't figure we're handicapped ... we just figure it's harder'n hell to get a job," Nerden said about himself and his 4-foot-tall wife of three months, Patricia.

"You have to prove yourself to everybody. Most people won't give you a chance," he said.

Nerden is 21 years old, 10 days older than his wife. He's working as a janitor at the Boulder County Human Resources Department, earning \$16 a night with the promise of morning work in the future. Mrs. Nerden can't find work, although she was trained as a pediatric nurse's aide in her home town of Rawlins, Wyo.

"She wants to get something working with kids. Like she says, kids are scared of a big lady in white but not of a little person," Nerden said. "The problem is that apparently not many people agree with her."

The Nerdens have had trouble holding jobs in the past. He was trained as a jeweler, like his 4-foot-tall father in Denver, but he says he had difficulty polishing silver without burning his fingers and lost that job. Both Steve and Patricia once worked on a ski manufacturing assembly line, but those jobs disappeared because their small arms didn't adjust to the line and they couldn't work as fast as their coworkers.

californian

## Dwarf gives birth to baby 18 inches long

CLEVELAND (UPI) — A 29-inch-tall dwarf known as Tiny Tina on the carnival and fair circuit gave birth Wednesday to an 18½-inch son weighing 5 pounds, 9 ounces.

Gloria Hurd, 23, Orlando, Fla., and her son, Anthony Timbatchu, were listed in good condition at Forest City Hospital, where doctors said the baby — delivered by

Cesarean section — appeared normal.

"You can say it is a very unusual case," said Dr. David Wallace who, along with a team of seven specialists, delivered the baby in a 1½ hour operation.

Ms. Hurd usually weighs between 42 and 44 pounds, according to her manager, Clarence Samuels.

"When Gloria came into the hospital she was all baby," said Mrs. Fred G. Hurd, Gloria's mother. "She was as wide as she was tall."

Friends said the baby's father is about 6 feet tall. The mother and father are not married, it was reported.

## Canute rules

One of the earliest and most famous rulers who invaded Britain was King Canute, who ruled in London 1017-1035 A.D.

## THE LITTLE PEOPLE INVITE YOU TO THEIR SALE

The Little People of America, those under 4 feet 8 when full grown, want you to come to their garage sale. They may be Little People but they promise Big Bargains.

The sale is set for Saturday and Sunday from 9 to 4 at 3860 Civic, corner of Cleary, Metairie.

Mrs. Alain Cracco, mother of one of The Little People, writes: "They are trying to raise money to send literature about Short Stature to the schools and physicians in the city, to make them aware of the organization and the help available through it."

"Dr. Cracco and I, with Derek and Nicole, recently returned from the national convention of Little People of America in Miami. There were over 400 Little People attending. It was quite an experience!"

"Dr. Cracco was delighted finally to meet a whole group of doctors interested in the problems of Little People. . ."

There are about 20 children or young people in the New Orleans club. Adults are welcome to join. New Orleans boasts two eminent magicians under 4 feet 8, each claiming to be the world's smallest magician, and they join the youngsters for their picnics.

Wanda Cracco Sept 22, 1976



# Grace de la Vega

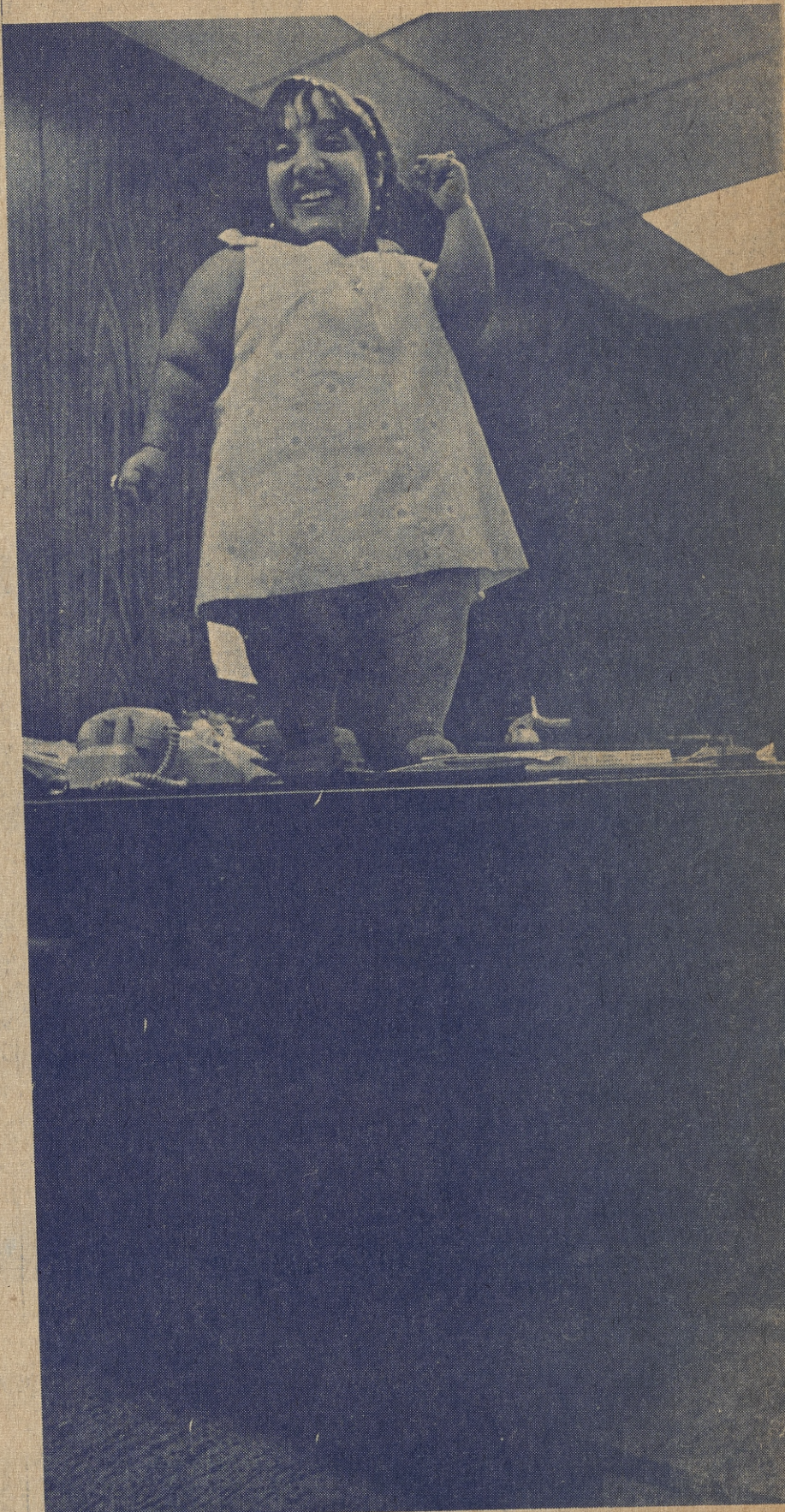
*no tiene  
complejos  
de  
estatura*

La juvenil Grace de la Vega es una artista liberada totalmente de complejos. Su pequeña estatura no es obstáculo para que Grace disfrute a plenitud de la vida, en la misma forma que lo hacen las personas de tamaño normal.

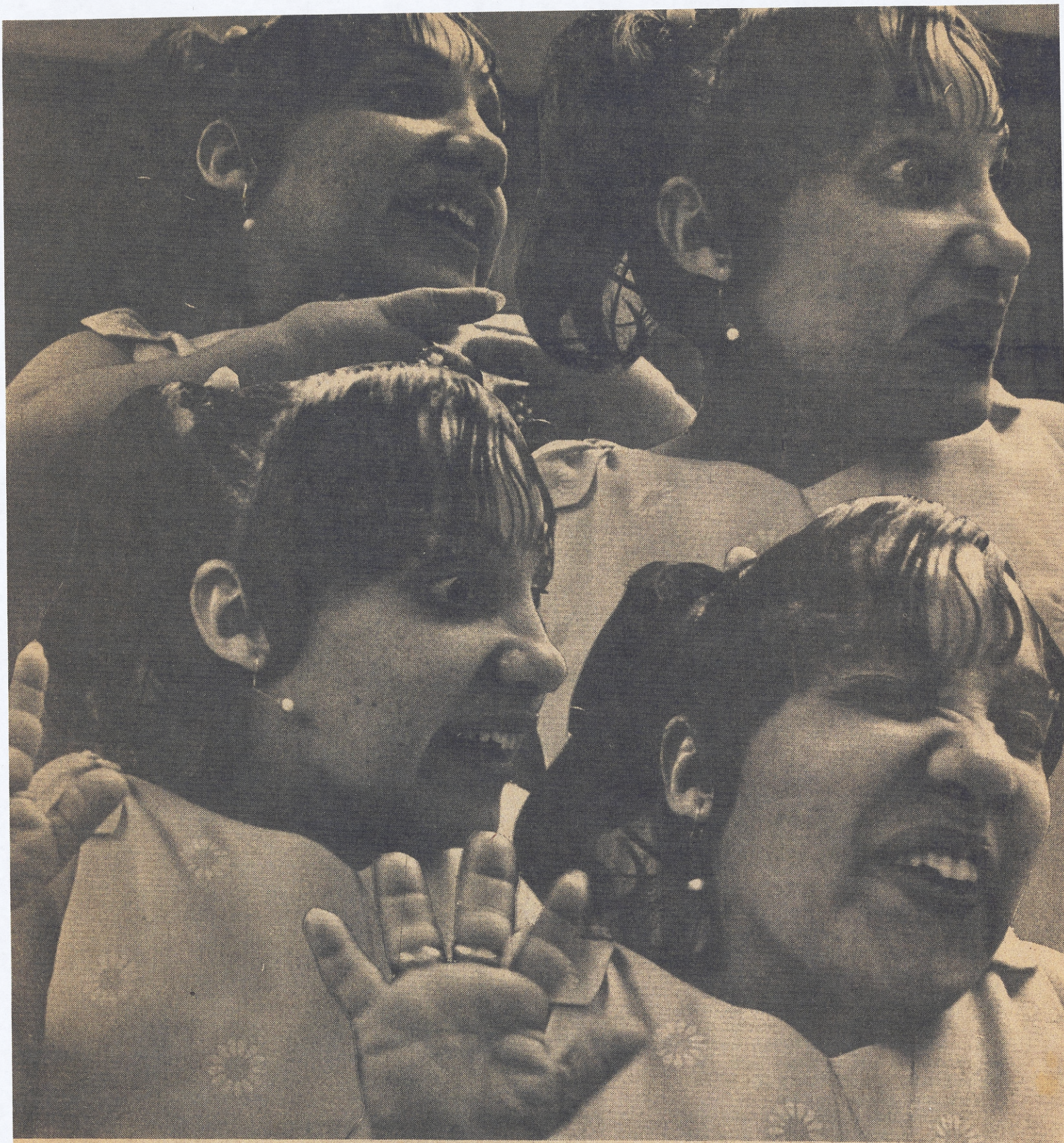
Grace, como todos ustedes recordarán, se inició en el arte formando parte del "Mini-Ballet" organizado por Sylvia de Grasse, hace más de dos años.

El "Mini-Ballet" constituyó todo un suceso en el espacio de "Los Alegres Tres", por Telemundo. Posteriormente, Grace se separó de sus restantes dos compañeritas —tan pequeñas en estatura como ella— y continuó como solista.

Actualmente, hace incursiones en la televisión, aunque no con la asiduidad que sus admiradores requieren. También sale a trabajar al exterior, espe-







cialmente para el público de New York, donde ella cuenta con mucha simpatía.

La popular artista baila y canta. Y lo hace con tanta gracia y espontaneidad que el público, al verla, simpatiza con ella de inmediato.

Grace tiene una cualidad que la dis-

tingue: jamás se le ve seria. Ella siempre tiene una sonrisa a flor de labios, lo que hace que resulte más agradable aún ante los ojos de todo el mundo.

La diminuta chiquilla está confiada en triunfar definitivamente en el arte, que ha abrazado como carrera. Sus padres,

que son muy complacientes con ella, la alientan en sus aspiraciones.

Grace tiene muchísimos enamorados que la asedian y le envían apasionadas cartas de amor. Ella dice, sin embargo, que por ahora no piensa en el amor.



# Nelson Ned: un enano “gigante”

**C**anciones como “Todo Pasará”, “Yo También Soy Sentimental”, “Yo Necesito Conversar con Dios”, “Será, Será” y otras de gran calibre, dan la medida de la jerarquía como compositor de Nelson Ned, ese enano brasileño que es un “gigante”, como lo bautizara Myrta Silva.

Nelson vino a Puerto Rico en semanas anteriores, debido a su interés en “conquistar” esta plaza, donde sus canciones han tenido tanta aceptación. Sin embargo, en la misma forma que sus composiciones han gustado en la Isla, no ocurría así con su voz y sus discos.

—Quería venir a Puerto Rico para demostrar lo que yo llamaría mi “rating” como cantante. Ocurre que en este es el único país de América Latina donde mis discos, conmigo de intérprete, no han “pegado”.

Todas las canciones que Nelson lleva al acetato son de su propia inspiración. Primero las graba en portugués. Después se hace la versión al español. Ha grabado aproximadamente 80 canciones, que son las mismas que tiene compuestas.

—De Puerto Rico vuelvo al Brasil, para hacer el lanzamiento de mi cuarto LP. El 8 de mayo debo estar en Estados Unidos, para cubrir distintas ciudades. Luego Canadá (Montreal y Toronto) y posteriormente Lisboa y Madrid.

En el Primer Festival de la Canción celebrado en Nueva York hace dos años, Nelson Ned obtuvo el quinto lugar con “Canción Popular”, original de él. Es soltero y tiene 24 años de edad. Nació en Ubá, estado de Minas Gerais, la misma ciudad donde vio la luz el inmortal Ary Barroso, autor de “Bahía”.

Su carrera artística la comenzó en Río de Janeiro, actuando en nite clubs







Nelson Ned es soltero y tiene 24 años de edad. Afirma que por ahora no piensa casarse.

*ción. Confieso que me gusta cantar más para el público latino que para el público americano.*

Es probable que Nelson retorne a Puerto Rico en junio o julio próximos, traído de nuevo por Myrta Silva. Integra una familia de siete hermanos, de los cuales él es el mayor. En total son dos varones y cinco hembras.

Reside en Río de Janeiro con sus padres y hermanos y viaja con su representante y empresario, Genival Melo. Este último es un hombre muy discreto que, a diferencia de otros agentes, deja que sea su representado quien lleve la voz cantante en la entrevista, sin inmiscuirse.

Nelson quedó muy satisfecho por las atenciones recibidas durante su estancia en Puerto Rico.

—Deseo, por medio de esta revista tan leída que es **ESTRELLAS**, agradecer la hospitalidad que me brindaron los puertorriqueños; las muestras de cariño recibidas, las llamadas telefónicas, las cartas, etc. Y espero que, en mi ausencia, mis canciones tengan la misma aceptación que yo tuve aquí durante mis presentaciones personales.

50 ESTRELLAS



Nelson desea conquistar Puerto Rico.

y boites. En 1967 empezó a componer. Y en marzo de 1969 grabó su primer disco, con la canción "Todo Pasará".

—Me siento igual como compositor que como cantante. No tengo preferencia por una u otra actividad. Son líneas que llevo paralelas, pues si bien es cierto que me gusta cantar, no menos me agrada hacer canciones. En mis composiciones siempre trato de llevar un mensaje de amor. En el mundo actual, las personas se olvidan de la palabra "sentimiento". Yo canto para los corazones enamorados. Para los apasionados.

Nelson Ned tiene ganados seis discos de oro. Y si tenemos en cuenta que la concesión de un disco de oro se le hace a un cantante cuando ha vendido un millón de copias, podemos tener una idea global de la cantidad de discos que ha vendido este simpático artista.

—En Brasil tengo mi propio programa de televisión. He visitado Argentina, Venezuela, Curazao y otros lugares de América Latina y en todos los sitios he encontrado la misma acepta-





**You're just an alien in an over-sized world when  
you're a four-foot dwarf.**

## CASTING AN EQUAL SHADOW

Not many of us experience the Alice-in-Wonderland problem of being so tiny we can't reach the door knob. But some people do. Extremely short people—dwarfs—live as aliens in a world built for persons twice their size.

Imagine being thirsty and not being able to reach a drinking fountain.

Or living in an apartment where you can't reach the controls on the stove.

Or having to take a stool with you to the laundromat because you can't get your clothes in or out of the top-loading washers.

These and dozens of other inconveniences fill the lives of dwarfs every day.

"We learn to always think ahead," said Al Stickney, a four-foot-six-inch aircraft maintenance planner for United Air Lines. "When we're grocery shopping we have to plan how we put things in our cart because we can't reach the bottom. Small items go in the baby's seat."

There are more than 50 types of dwarfism. They can be divided into two major categories: proportionate short stature, in which the body proportions are normal, and disproportionate short stature, in

which the limbs are short relative to the body or vice versa.

Dwarfism is caused by either a mutated gene, or a lazy pituitary gland. It is not hereditary.

Four-foot-two-inch Harriet Stickney worked as an elementary school teacher for several years before marrying and moving to the Bay Area.

"I remember the amusement I experienced in high school," she says. "In those days, every girl had to take charm class. They taught you how to sit and walk and how to get in and out of a car. I'd just laugh when my turn came because there is no way I can climb in or out of a car with charm."

One of Harriet's current amusements is the mirror level in public restrooms. "I can only see my bangs. I joke about having the best combed bangs in town."

Problems with men's public restrooms are a bit more serious. Urinals are not always designed with extremely short people in mind.

No one is certain about how many short-statured people (as they prefer to be called) there are nationwide.

"It isn't asked on census reports," Harriet says. "And lots of people don't want to admit that they are, or that a member of their family is a dwarf."

▶ ▶ ▶

**Story By Sunny Merik  
Photos By Cap Carpenter**

*Reaching the coin slot on a telephone or food items in a supermarket are daily problems to dwarfs like Al and Harriet Stickney.*

## Dwarfs . . .



*The Stickeys battle the problems of short people in stores and at home.*



# Some Little People Who Think Big

By Nancy Dooley

"Size shouldn't keep people from entering the field of their choice or from having a good time."

This is the credo of the Little People of America, whose western district is meeting today at the Oakland Hilton in preparation for their national convention in July.

Mr. and Mrs. Al Stickney, a vivacious couple from San Bruno, took time out from their preparations for the meetings yesterday to describe the Little People, some of the problems they encounter, and the way dwarfs cope with their height.

"We are working with medical research centers throughout the country to find out whatever we can about dwarfism," explains Mrs. Stickney, a former elementary school teacher who is national vice-president of LPA. She is 4'2".

## Doctors Invited

To this end, they have invited several Bay Area doctors to their conference today and Dr. David Rimoin, director of the Short Stature Clinic at UCLA's Harbor General Hospital.

There is no known cure for disproportionate dwarfism, which afflicts the Stickneys. Although their bodies have a normal-size trunk, they have very short limbs.

Medical research is only one of LPA's concerns, however. The members work with average-size parents of

dwarf children "who often suffer a traumatic experience," says Mrs. Stickney.

## Parental Reaction

"There is sometimes a severe reaction from parents who don't want to face the fact that their child is dwarfed," she says. "This can be very damaging to the child."

The average-size parents also counsel one another at LPA's bi-monthly meetings. "We don't know what it is to be an average-size parent," says Mrs. Stickney, "so they help each other."

LPA members are also on the look-out for federal and state legislation to aid the handicapped. Louis Scharer, a retired budget officer who worked at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana for 28 years, examines proposed legislation "that might be of benefit to us."

## Bill Vetoes

President Nixon recently vetoed a bill to create a special board within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare for the education and study of the welfare of the handicapped. The proposal was too costly.

Scharer is hopeful, however, that the administration will soon introduce a similar, less costly bill.

Scharer's height — 3'3" — has not stopped him from doing much.

Since his retirement in 1971, he has travelled to Hawaii, South America, the Caribbean, and the British Isles. "I try to smoke these little people out of the

wood," he laughs. "I try to get them to join our group."

## Instruction

Part of the reason for today's meeting is to instruct the hotel about the Little People's needs.

Mrs. Stickney, for instance, cannot reach the clothes rack in the closet. And the registration desk in the lobby is too high. ("The best place for a little person to hide is behind the counter of an office," says Scharer.)

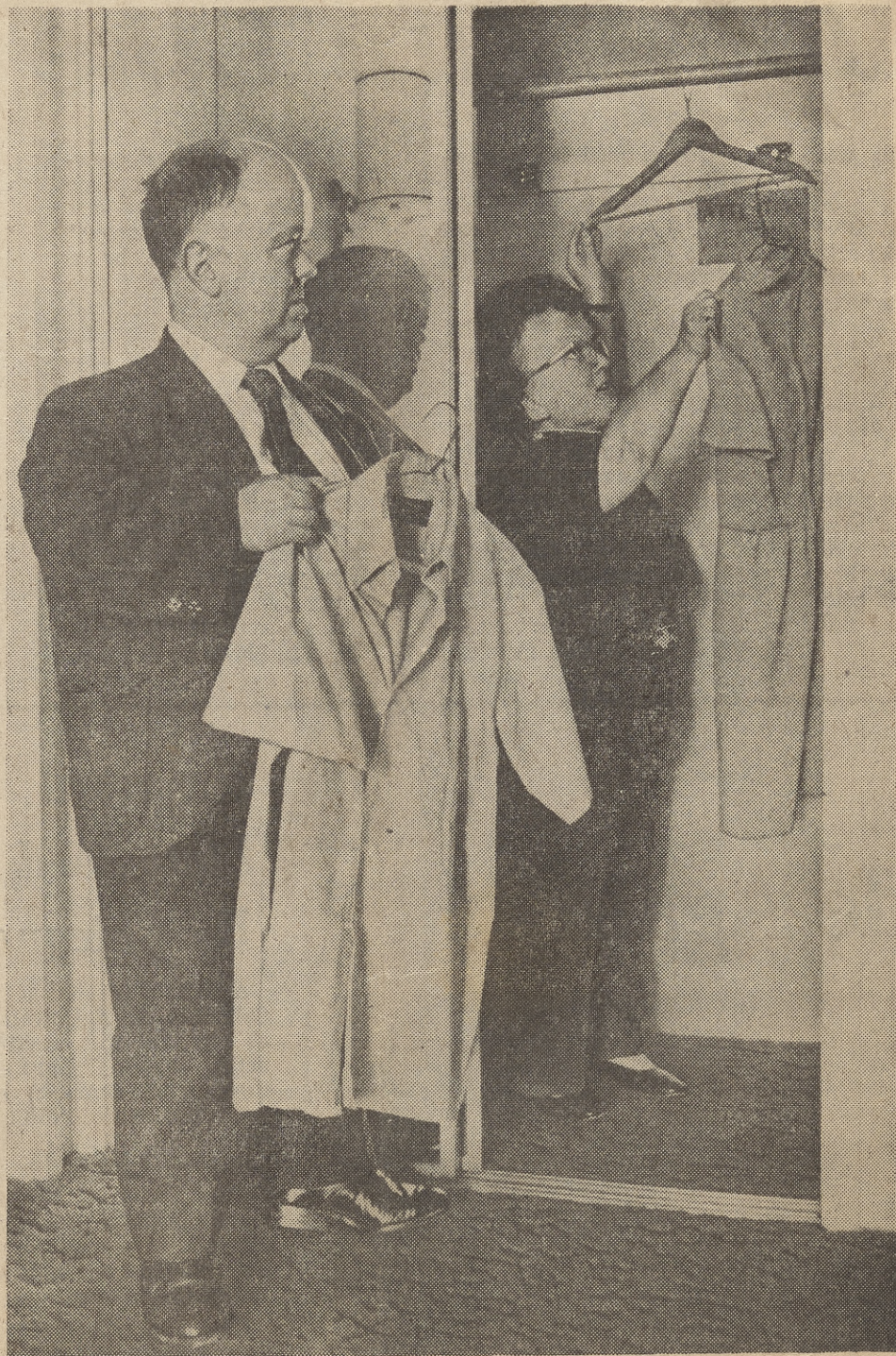
Nor can dwarfs reach many towel racks, telephones, door knobs, and elevator buttons. The Hilton will solve the last problem by providing sticks to push the buttons.

## Comfort

Mostly, though, the Little People of America exist because "we realize there is comfort or help knowing you're not alone," says Mrs. Stickney. The group was founded in 1957 with only 20 people, and the national membership has increased to more than 2,000. The Bay Area membership alone totals 150.

"Dwarfism has no respect for race, creed or economic condition," says Mrs. Stickney. "We make a point of enjoying life. There aren't too many fields we can't go into."

Adds her husband, Al, an airplane mechanic for United Air Lines, "Education is the key. If you have the education, you can do whatever you want."



ONE OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF BEING UNDERSIZED  
Al and Harriet Stickney find hotel closets troublesome for hanging clothes.  
—Examiner photo by Teresa Zabala

PAGE 2, THE PLAINVIEW REPORTER-NEWS, THURSDAY, JANUARY 6, 1977



## Boyfriend

Arturo Gil (left) of New Orleans came a long way for a holiday visit with a friend. His friend is Plainview's Suzie Barnes. Both are high school students and both are dwarfs.

# Little People Mark Holidays

This is a little story of a happy holiday, Suzie Barnes' happy holiday.

Suzie is 15 and a freshman at Plainview High School. She has a boyfriend who lives in New Orleans, La.

The two met at a convention in Chicago four years ago. They renewed their friendship two years ago at another convention and then again in 1976 in Miami.

This year the young man, 16-year-old Arturo Gil, extended the acquaintance by spending a week in Suzie's home in Plainview.

He arrived at the Wade Blakney residence the Monday after Christmas and left for New Orleans Sunday (Jan. 2).

The two high school students have had happen to them what is supposed to have happened at the conventions — friendship with people like themselves.

Suzie Barnes and Arturo Gil are dwarfs and the conventions where they have met are the national meetings of the 2,000-member Little People of America, Inc.

LPA was formed in 1957

by actor Bill Barty to help all of those in America who are "considerable smaller in stature than most" to cope with the world of "average people." (Suzie explains that LPA uses the term "average" rather than "normal" because of the implication that that which isn't normal is abnormal.) Arturo says he calls everybody else "tall people."

The LPA conventions on the local and national level are intended partially to help little people meet other little people.

Suzie is 3 feet 9½ inches tall and the only dwarf in Plainview. Arturo is 3 feet, 6 inches tall.

"Sometimes they'll stare and point," she says.

Arturo's solution to the problem is "I'll just say 'Hi' to 'em. It puts them in a state of shock, but it gets them a little loosened up."

There are also the physical problems of having to deal with a world designed for bigger people. Suzie says she had trouble with the steps at PHS when she first started school but has gotten over the problem.

Arturo's visit to Plainview was filled with shopping and meeting Suzie's friends as well as a New Year's Eve Party at the Blakney's church.

There isn't a great deal to do here, Arturo says, particularly compared to New Orleans, "but Plainview is a nice little town."

## DWARFS, MIDGETS PLAN CONVENTION

Dorothy Gil wants to hear from all dwarfs or midgets 4 feet 10 or shorter who are interested in a convention of Little People of America.

"I have two 'little people' of my own," Mrs. Gil related at 283-4901. "My son, Ricardo, better known as Ricki, is 18 now and going to University of New Orleans but he stands only 3 feet 9."

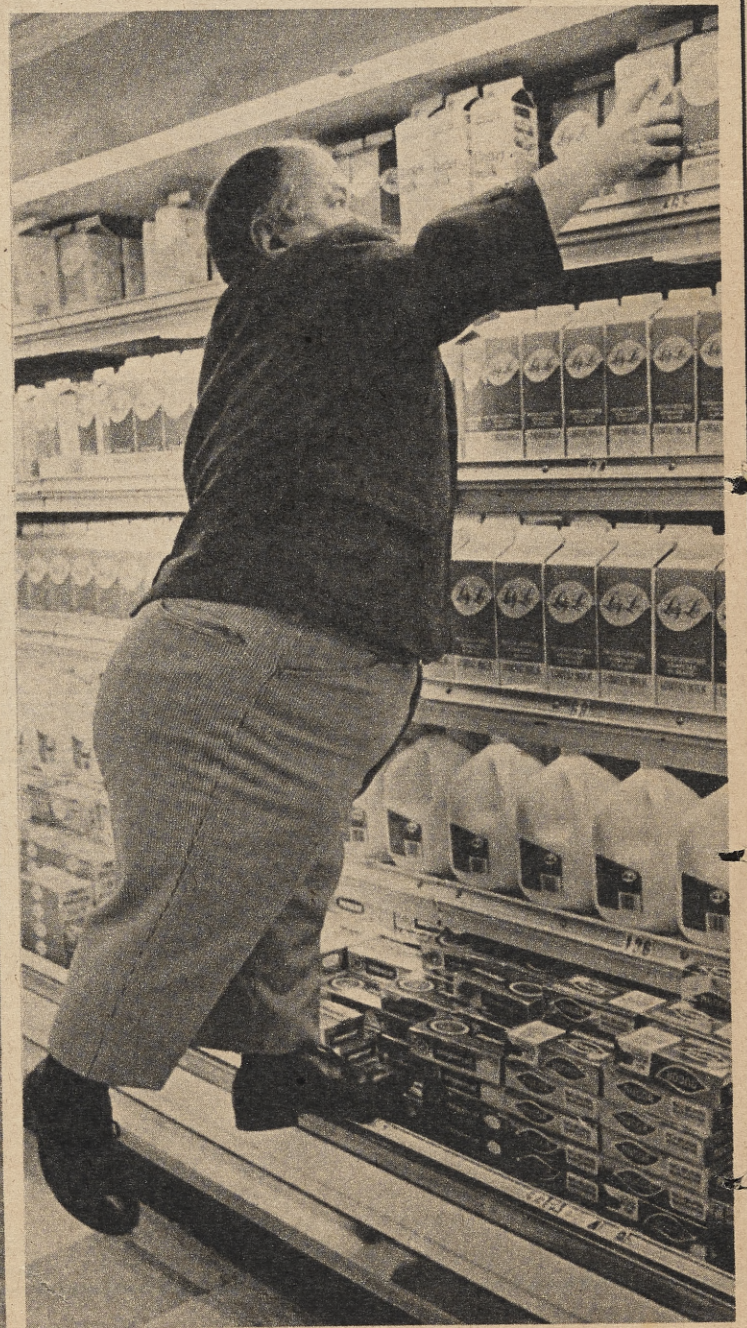
"Another son, Arturo, 15, is going to First Assembly of God High School. He is only 3 feet 6 but may grow a little taller. We are from Puerto Rico, where there were other dwarfs and we enjoyed activities of Little People of America."

I broke in here. "Do you mind telling me how you reacted to having two sons who are dwarfs — was it a shock to you?" I asked Mrs. Gil.

"No!" she laughed. "It was more of a shock to my doctor."



1977







Pat Bilon, of Youngstown, Ohio, Finds Ordinary Tasks Hard at Times



Despite His Size, Blye De Lair Serves as Volunteer Fireman



Although Small, David U. Urbina Serves as Puerto Rican Legislator

# The Little People

## Midgets, Dwarfs Adjust to Big World

By EDDIE ADAMS

**A**TTILA the Hun was a dwarf. Napoleon and two presidents of the United States, John Quincy Adams and Martin Van Buren, were shorter than usual.

No one knows how many dwarfs and midgets there are in the United States today—estimates run as high as 100,000 persons who are under four feet, 10 inches; more than 500,000 Americans are under five feet.

Legend and myth call small people elves, gnomes, leprechauns, goblins, and pixies. They have existed for as long as the human race, yet the world knows little about them.

**MIDGETS** and dwarfs live in every country and are born into every race. They are doctors, lawyers, nurses, schoolteachers, firemen, engineers, and truck drivers.

School kids laugh. Some adults point and stare. Dr. Hugh Brodesky, a psychiatrist in Jacksonville, Fla.,

who stands four feet, seven inches, said: "If you are under five feet, let's face it, you are different. Suppose you see all the trees around you with green leaves and one with blue leaves. Wouldn't you be surprised or taken back a little?"

The average American is five feet, 10 inches.

A malfunctioning pituitary gland produces a midget—a miniature carbon copy of an average-sized person, but with a squeaky voice. The dwarf, on the other hand, is abnormally proportioned, with normal head, trunk, and voice, but short arms and legs.

When midgets mate, they almost always produce a child of normal size. The baby of two dwarfs can be either a dwarf or normal.

Frank and Emma Lentini, of Auburn, N.Y., are dwarfs, just over four feet tall. Their son, Gerry, is five feet, 10 inches.

Dr. Charles Scott, Jr., director of the University of Texas Medical Genetics Clinic and chairman of the Medical Advisory Board of the Little People of America, explained that achondroplasia, a cartilage and bone condition, produces the most common type dwarf.

**MOST** persons don't realize their condition until they are eight or nine, when their school chums pass them in height. In many cases that's when an inferiority complex begins, driving many little persons to be well-educated and competitive to outdo those of normal size.

A common outcry of little people is that they suffer job discrimination more than other minority groups, although their intellectual development is unaffected by their physical condition.

Pat Bilon is a nightclub bouncer in Youngstown, Ohio, although he is

only two feet, 10 inches—one inch taller than Michu of circus fame. He had thought of himself as three feet tall until he took a driver's license test. "They measured my height and said I was two feet, 10 inches. We had some fight going on until I was proven wrong."

David Urbina Urbina, a representative in the Puerto Rican legislature, said that "being four feet, 10 inches tall has its advantages. People are impressed when they see such a small man with a strong resonant voice."

"I've used my height in politics. . . . It motivates political slogans like 'the little giant' or 'the David' from David and Goliath that put me in the position of a hero."

Little people almost always are defensive and say they don't have problems. Yet the homes they live in and their daily routine can be difficult, such as opening drawers or a door, shopping for groceries, crossing a street, making phone calls from a telephone booth, or buying clothes.

"Thank goodness children's clothes are now styled like adults," commented one little person.

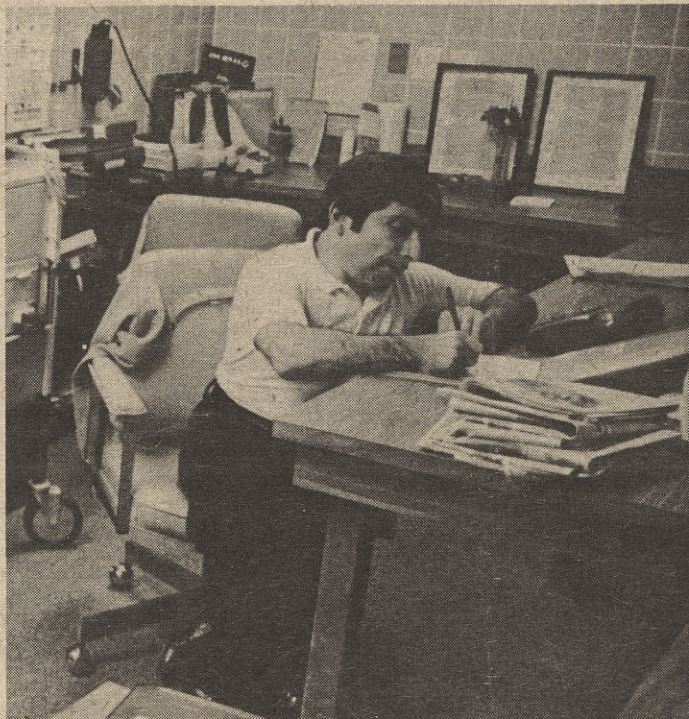
In 1957, 20 little people led by Hollywood actor Billy Barty met in Reno, Nev., to form the Little People of America. The only requirements for membership are to be four feet, 10 inches or less and to "think big," the organization's motto.

As many as 600 members attend the annual week-long convention, and they always seem full of gaiety.

"But don't let this week fool you," said one little woman after last year's convention in Chicago. "Remember, we still have another 51 weeks to live before our next convention."



Frank and Emma Lentini Have Normal-Sized Son



Dr. Hugh Brodesky Works as Psychiatrist

**GRIT**  
*Family*  
*Section*



# Littlest Magician Has His Act Together

—Staff Photos By Donald V. Stout

## Shoe promoter, "Buster Brown," dies

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — John Clifton, purportedly the last survivor of a series of midgets who played the role of Buster Brown in promoting shoes, died Wednesday in a local hospital after a long illness. He was 89.

Clifton, as Buster Brown, would don a Lord Fauntleroy jacket, blond wig, red beret and knickers and, with Tige, would entertain as many as 1,000 children at a time in whistle-stop performances on store roofs and in theaters promoting Buster Brown shoes.

He toured North America for 12 years with a trained bulldog, chanting: "I'm

Buster Brown. I live in a shoe. This is my dog Tige. He lives there, too."

Clifton's wife, Selecta, said Clifton was the second midget to play Buster Brown. They were married in 1925. Then Clifton quit his job as Buster Brown and the couple moved here.

They opened a Buster Brown sandwich shop and then a dry cleaning firm before going to work for state agencies.

He was 52 inches tall and weighed 80 pounds. His wife was 40 inches tall and weighed 65 pounds. They met in Clovis, N.M.

The Cliftons were publicized years later when they had a midget daughter, purportedly a medical first. "We're pituitary midgets and our smallness isn't hereditary," Mrs. Clifton said.

Medical experts were said to be even more amazed when Myrna, the Clifton's daughter, and her husband, Clarence Swenson, who played a little person in "The Wizard of Oz," had two midget children, as well as a normal-sized girl.

"Third generation midgets are unheard of," Mrs. Clifton said.

The 14-member clan, including four normal-sized great-grandchildren, celebrated Clifton's birthday Dec. 25. Her husband dressed in his original Buster Brown costume.

"He saved it all those years," she said.

By J.E. BOURGOYNE

The little magician on the pizza parlor's stage begins to saw a lady from the audience in half. The magician's name is Irwin Royes. He is four feet, three inches tall, "the world's smallest magician."

The smell of pepperoni and melted cheese is thick in the air. Above the sound of the magician's saw, a magnified voice booms, "PIZZA ORDER NUMBER 72, PICK UP."

The magician goes right on sawing the lady in half. Then he stops, seeming to forget what he is doing. It's only part of the act though. The magician's lovely assistant reminds him of the trick in process and he starts sawing again.

The assistant, an attractive young woman of normal height, is the magician's wife. They were married about a month ago.

The box on stage is sawed in half, but the lady from the audience emerges in one piece. There is applause.

"SANDWICH ORDER NUMBER 32, PICK UP. PICK UP SANDWICH ORDER NUMBER 53..."

\*\*\*

It may not sound like it, but this is a love story — the story of the two loves of Irwin Royes: his love for magic and his love for his new wife Denise.

The story begins when Irwin was born, with a tumor the size of a pear in his stomach, a broken arm and a bone disease called osteogenesis imperfecta — which involves brittle bones and the deformity of long bones.

"That's why I'm a 'little person.' I hate the word 'midget.' It's a cruel word," Irwin says, sitting on the sofa in his and Denise's Metairie apartment.

She puts groceries away in the kitchen while he talks.

"I've spent a lot of time in hospitals, sometimes months at a time. When I was about 12 or 13 I was in the hospital around Christmas and a magician came to perform.

"I'd always liked magic. I had a few cheap pocket tricks with me at the hospital and I showed them to the magician. He invited me to join the Crescent City Magicians' Club. After that particular hospital visit I joined the club. I started learning more about magic and started building up a better collection of tricks.

"I'm 29 now and I've been doing magic professionally since I was 21. Before that I went to Delgado and studied commercial art. I was 18 when I got my degree and went to work for an advertising company.

"I only worked a few months and then I had to have surgery on both ankles. After the operation one of the ankles had to be redone. It took so much time I didn't try to get my job back.

"I tried working as a free lance commercial artist at home. I started doing magic for kids. I would dress as a clown and work birthday parties and hospital shows.

"And the HAM came out. I loved it. I started advertising, got business cards printed and every time I made some extra money I bought new magic tricks.

"A friend told me about a new restaurant on Veterans Highway that was bringing in singers on weekends. I called the manager and then went out there. I sat at a table and did some close-up magic for the boss and he said to come out that next Saturday and do a show.

"I called a friend who was a radio DJ and he gave me a few plugs for the show. I had all my friends come out to make the place look crowded.

"It was my first 'biggie' and it was a bad show. Badly organized. I was so nervous I was shaking. But the crowd was there; we sold pizzas and that's what counts.

"The boss asked me to come back the next weekend and I've been working regularly, every Friday and Saturday night, at the Fireside Inn for the past six and a half years.

"It's a tough show to do with all those pizza and sandwich orders being yelled out while you're performing. But Denise and I play it by ear and we've built up a regular audience. Sometimes there's only about four people in the place and then it fills up just before show time."

In addition to performing at the Fireside Inn regularly, Irwin works as a clown for some of the circuses when they come to New Orleans. He does his magic for children's parties and trade shows. For a trade show held in Las Vegas not long ago he grew a beard and donned a green suit and appeared as a leprechaun magician.

"They had been looking for someone short who could do magic," Irwin says deadpan. "I wonder why they wanted me?"

He performs without pay at hospitals and for charity benefits. "I always told myself," he says, "that whenever I started making money with magic, I wouldn't stop doing shows for kids in hospitals."

What about Irwin's claim to be the world's smallest magician?

"I'm the smallest I know of," he says. "There used to be another guy in town, Joe White, who billed himself as 'Micro,' the smallest magician in the world. But once at a circus the ringmaster measured us and Joe was a couple of inches taller than me.

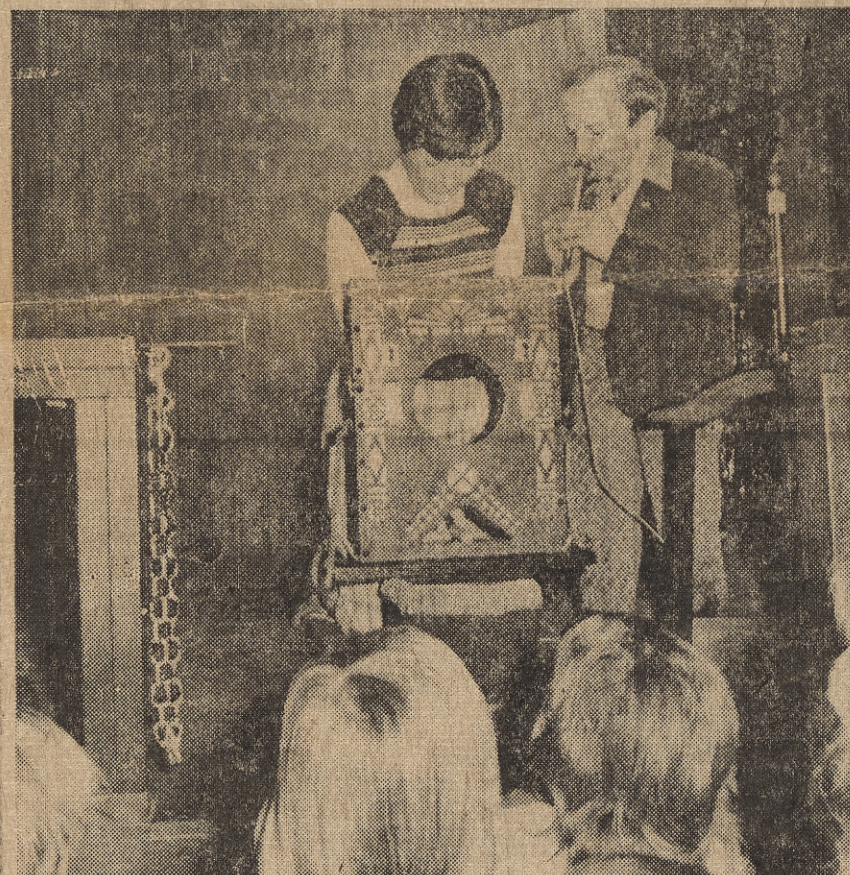
"Now if someone shorter than me came along doing some simple little tricks, I wouldn't worry about that."

Irwin's shortness is a great gimmick for his magic career, but what about the price he's had to pay for that gimmick?

"I've never thought about it," he says. "All I know is that I'm very lucky. The doctors told me that I would 'grow out' of my bone disease as I got



"...OBSERVE THE SHARP BLADE."



"KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE CARROT."



older and I haven't had any broken bones since I was 18.

"The doctor who delivered me told my mother I would be an invalid for life. I sure would like to see him and show him I'm not.

"I work, I drive a car, and I'm married. I never thought I'd see myself married."

\*\*\*

Without his career in magic, Irwin probably would never have met and married Denise. She was a friend of his sister and Denise used to go to the Fireside Inn on weekends because Irwin's sister used to be his assistant in the act.

One night after the show Irwin's sister, Gail, had to leave and he and Denise ended up alone together at one of the pizza parlor's tables. He showed her some card tricks. They joked and laughed.

As Irwin tells the story of their courtship's beginning, Denise comes to the doorway of the kitchen. There are two versions of the story.

"I had just gotten a new phone number," Denise says from the doorway, "and I gave it to him to give to Gail, but he kept it."

Irwin says, "But she really wanted ME to have the number."

Anyway, Irwin called. They started dating.

"I worried," says Denise, "about what I'd do if he got serious. How would I get rid of him without hurting his feelings?"

But the two kept seeing each other. More and more. One night Irwin's sister couldn't assist him in the act. Denise had to fill in.

"I did the whole act," she says, "and when we finished I still didn't know how Irwin did those tricks."

Before Irwin and Denise knew it, they had fallen in love.

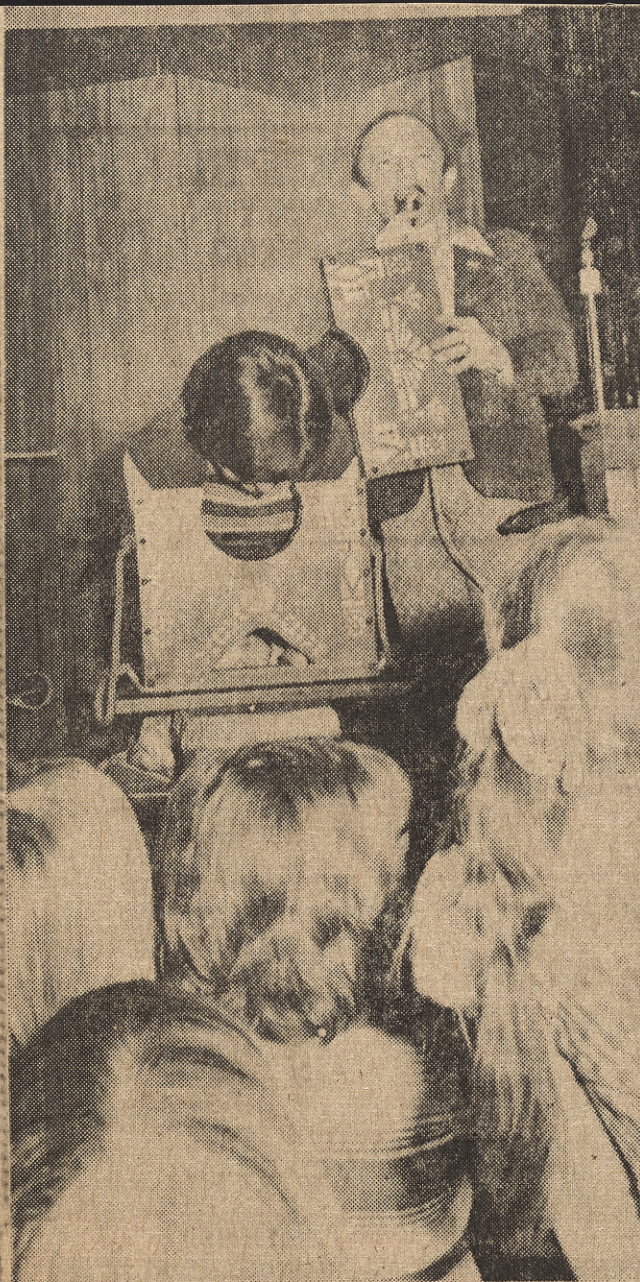
"It just sort of comes over you," explains Denise. "Then I had to tell my parents. They didn't like the idea at first. Parents always want their daughters to marry tall and handsome."

"Instead," Irwin says with a twinkle in his eye, "she married handsome and short."

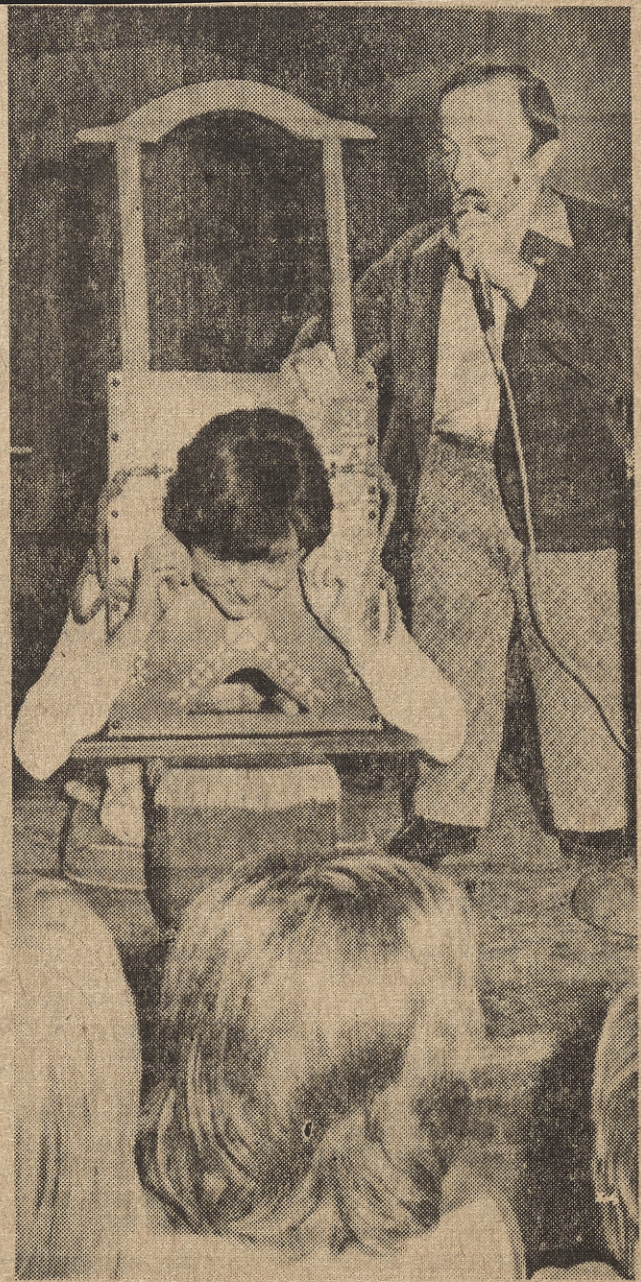
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Irwin and Denise have in their apartment what they call a "magic room." Here are trunks filled with magic props, a cage with two doves that are used in the act. In a closet hang clown costumes and a bookshelf contains mementoes of Irwin's magic career and scrapbooks.

He takes one of the scrapbooks and brings it into the living room. Sitting on the sofa next to Denise, Irwin leafs through the pages. There are pictures of Irwin with plumed showgirls, of circus people with whom he has worked. There are handbills Irwin designed himself to promote his act.



"WATCH THE LADY'S HEAD."



"AND DOWN WITH THE BLADE..."



## CHILD FROM AUDIENCE GETS INTO ACT

Irwin doesn't notice it, but as he glows over the scrapbook chronicling his accomplishments Denise seems to glow over him, revealing a sense of pride in her husband's dedication and enthusiasm for his art.

"Don't you like this?" Irwin asks. "I've always loved it."

He points to a white circle pasted in his scrapbook. Inside the circle are

words from a letter written by Redd Foxx to Federico Fellini:

"Love seldom comes to the clown. He is admired, yet when he speaks tender words the ladies believe it's part of his repertoire. He sits on a throne of wax, saying to himself, 'My God, what shall I do should it melt away?'"

The smallest magician in the world doesn't have to worry about that. Not anymore.



# Certain Controversial Song Makes Short People Stand Tall in Rage

JAN. 18, 78

WALL ST JNL.

Continued From First Page

ers are walking around wearing "I get small with Sue O'Neil" buttons passed out by the station.

Miss O'Neil says lots of short people call her to complain about other Cleveland stations that play unaltered versions of the song. She says she tells them to protest by not listening to the other stations.

At least two other stations, WROV of Roanoke, Va., and WVBF, Boston, have turned the controversial record into a promotion gimmick. Burton L. Levine, five-foot, six-inch, owner of WROV, says he "started to play it when it came out a few weeks ago like everybody else did," and got a lot of requests. Then came the protests, including a long thoughtful letter from a school teacher and mother of four, who wrote, "I would no more point out to person his lack of height than I would call a person with glasses 'four-eyes.'"

Mr. Levine knew he had a problem, but rather than take the song off the air he sent the same inspiration as Miss O'Neil. He had his creative director, Kevin O'Neill, six-foot-two, into the sound studio to record a responsive "Tall People" song that's now played end-to-end with the Newman song. It goes, in part:

*They got arms like gorillas and long hairy toes;  
When you're standing beside 'em you got to look up their nose.  
They got long skinny fingers and big floppy feet,  
And they're starvin' the world with all the food that they eat.*

"Instantly, we started to get requests to play 'Tall People,'" Mr. Levine says. And the objections to "Short People" dwindled.

## A Short President?

Chuck Roberts, five-foot, six-inch, station manager of WVBF, had a contest in which listeners guessed how many times WVBF played "Short People" between Thanksgiving and Chanukah. There were thousands of entries, he says, making it one of the station's most successful promotions. As a result, he says, he has been asked to give a speech next month before the Boston Association of Dwarfs. He says he plans to do something. "We might register short people. There are so many short people in the country that if we all stuck together we could probably elect Mickey Rooney president or something."

The winner of the WVBF contest was Pat Murray, five-feet-six, who operates a Kelly Girl franchise in Boston. The prize for Mrs. Murray and her husband, who is five-foot-ten, was a trip to Los Angeles where they went out to dinner with Mr. Newman himself. The prescribed entree was short ribs.

"He was a super-nice person," Mrs. Murray says. "He's got a great personality."

That may be, but Ira Apple, five-feet-seven, program director at WBZ in Boston, yanked the song off the air after two weeks of playing it. He didn't mind that some adults "hated" it and thought it was "horrible and disgusting," but he says the letters about children really hurt.

## Peer-Group Problem

"I heard about one child whose peers surrounded him and sang the song. It really is very devastating to them. An adult can take that sort of thing. A short kid is not accustomed to it," Mr. Apple says.

as you and I/All men are brothers until the day they die."

Mr. Newman declined to be interviewed. His manager, Elliot Abbott, says all the radio-station bannings are helping to push the song toward number one in the country. "People want to hear what they aren't allowed to," he says. He also says Mr. Newman is "really surprised at the reaction. The song was obviously intended to be satirical."

Not so surprised is Kal Rudman, the nation's leading publisher of "tip sheets" that counsel radio stations in advance of songs that are likely to be hits. Last October, before "Short People" was even released, Mr. Rudman wrote it up on his front page and forecast "heavy, heavy tonnage!!!"

"The reaction of people to this song just reinforces why this song is really necessary," Mr. Rudman says. "People really are prejudiced. A lot of them don't have a sense of humor."

## SHORT PEOPLE

Words & Music by Randy Newman.  
Copyright 1977 by High Tree Music Co.  
Used by Permission.

\* \* \*

## TALL PEOPLE

Words & Music by Kevin O'Neill.  
Used by Permission of Radio Station WROV,  
Roanoke, Va.

# Certain Song Makes The Short People Stand Tall in Rage

JAN 18, 78 \* \* ST. JNL.

Some Radio Stations Ban Hit

By Randy Newman, Who Only Had Satire in Mind

By JONATHAN KWITNY

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Roger Warren is a six-foot, three-inch dentist in Clifton, N.J., with a problem. Recently, while drilling, filling and polishing his patients' teeth, he has been startled to discover that whenever a certain song comes on the radio, Ronnie Carnivale, his four-foot, ten-inch dental assistant storms out of the room and won't come back till the song is over.

The song is called "Short People," and it is either the number two or number three or number five popular song in the country depending on which chart you follow. It starts out this way:

*Short people got no reason to live.  
They got little hands and little eyes,  
They walk around telling great big lies,  
They got little noses and tiny little teeth,  
They wear platform shoes on their nasty little feet.  
Well, I don't want no short people 'round here.*

"It's a put-down," Miss Carnivale complains. "It's got a catchy tune, but it doesn't say very nice things about short people."

Indeed it doesn't. Here's some more:  
*They got little baby legs, they stand so low,  
You got to pick 'em up just to say hello.  
They got little cars that go beep, beep, beep.*

*They got little voices goin' peep, peep, peep,  
They got grubby little fingers and dirty little minds,  
They gonna get you every time.  
Don't want no short people 'round here.*

A lot of people think the song is funny—a parody making fun of prejudice, not of short people, which is exactly the way singer and songwriter Randy Newman, who is five-feet, eleven-inches tall, intended it.

Others, like Miss Carnivale, don't think the song is funny, and while these people are small in size, they are not small in numbers. In fact, they are creating a national furor. They have caused the song to be banned in Boston, as well as in New York, Philadelphia and other places.

Some short people, such as Ellie Dylan, who is an even five feet tall, say they love the song. But Miss Dylan, who also is the morning disc jockey for WNBC in New York, won't play the song on the air because other short people don't love it. NBC is one of four stations in the city that are said to have banned the song from the air.

"We did not ban it," asserts Miss Dylan, sounding a lot bigger than her 79 pounds. "We just do a ton of research. The music is selected by the listeners. 'Short People' has gotten more negatives than positives."

## Lots of Research

Jay Cook, who is five-feet, six-inches tall and program director of WFIL in Philadelphia, says his station hasn't banned the song either. "I thought it was a sort of cute record, myself," Mr. Cook volunteers. But he says his station also does a lot of research.

And Mr. Cook insists that his research shows that more than 50% of all persons from 35 to 44 years old say they would change stations rather than listen to "Short People." And 38.5% of all women 25 to 34 years old would do the same (men of that age aren't quite so negative, he says). Mr. Cook says only one other record in his memory has gotten such a strong negative response, a song called, "It's Ecstasy When You Lay Down Next To Me." ("The title of that was just a little bit more than our audience can take. And there were a lot of complaining and groaning on it," Mr. Cook explains.)

WZZD in Philadelphia also won't play "Short People" because its program manager says research showed poor audience reaction. The manager is Kevin Metheny, five-feet-six, and he admits people call him "The Dwarf."

Sue O'Neil, who is "almost" five feet tall ("I've tried to grow in the past year and I'm just about there") has found there are two sides to her feelings about the record. Miss O'Neil, who is the morning "disc jockey" on WGCL, Cleveland, didn't like it the first time she heard it. "I thought it was rather derogatory toward short people," she says.

Now, however, she says, "It's become my most requested record in the morning." The reason is, Miss O'Neil has begun a counter-campaign around the song. "I've always wanted to do a thing about being Cleveland's shortest disc jockey, because obviously I am," she says. So she has taped a new version of the song with her own argumentative retorts to Mr. Newman's lyrics voiced over the original recording. "The tall people listen to Randy Newman and the short people listen to me," she says. "The response has been super." The station also claims that thousands of pint-sized Cleveland-

Please Turn to Page 31, Column 4



# The Smallest Man in the World

Antonio Ferreira is the shortest man in the world — but claims he's also the happiest.

He stands just 2 feet 5½ inches tall and says he really loves it.

"I love life and I love being the smallest man in the world."

"I know what I am and I am happy. I am somebody!" he declares.

"I have many, many fine friends and I lead a very full, hectic life."

Antonio, 38, is a professional drummer and the leader of a combo that entertains at nightclubs.

In an exclusive interview in his hometown of Arcozelo das Vigas, Portugal, he told The

By **RICHARD BAKER**

ENQUIRER about his amazing life and upbeat outlook.

"When I was a young boy it hurt very much being a dwarf, and tears often flooded my eyes," he admitted. "I detested it and often prayed to God for a miracle to make me grow bigger."

"I remember when I was 15 years old, the other boys would run around and I would try to keep up with them. It was tough, but I never gave

up and they seemed to respect me for it.

"But when someone called me a 'dwarf,' it was like an arrow being shot into my heart."

"Now that's all in the past. Today it doesn't bother me in the slightest. In a way, God did give me a miracle because He gave me love and contentment."

Antonio often uses special miniature crutches to get around, not because he cannot run and dance without them but because they give his short legs longer strides.

"It's the little things that normal-sized people take for granted that I find difficult," he says. "Holding the telephone is awkward and knives and forks seem huge."

"I have a great fear of elevators because I can't reach the buttons. I dread the thought of being stuck on one."

"I have had many girlfriends — all normal-sized."

"One day I may fall in love. But at the moment I am happy living with my elderly parents."

"I am never sad. About 15 years ago I saw some mentally handicapped children. From that moment on, I realized just how lucky I was because I have all my functions and can enjoy life."

"These poor children — they were much worse off than me."

"I walked away with tears in my eyes, thanking God for the way I was."

Antonio is a self-taught drummer and formed his own group several years ago. "All the other members are normal-sized," he said.

"We play anything from country music to hard rock. I organize everything. I manage the group, get the gigs, book hotels, arrange the travel..."

"Last month we toured South Africa. We're going to make our first record soon."

"I cannot tell you how happy this all makes me. I am somebody. I am not a freak in a sideshow. Thank You, God, for giving me lots of happiness in such a small body."

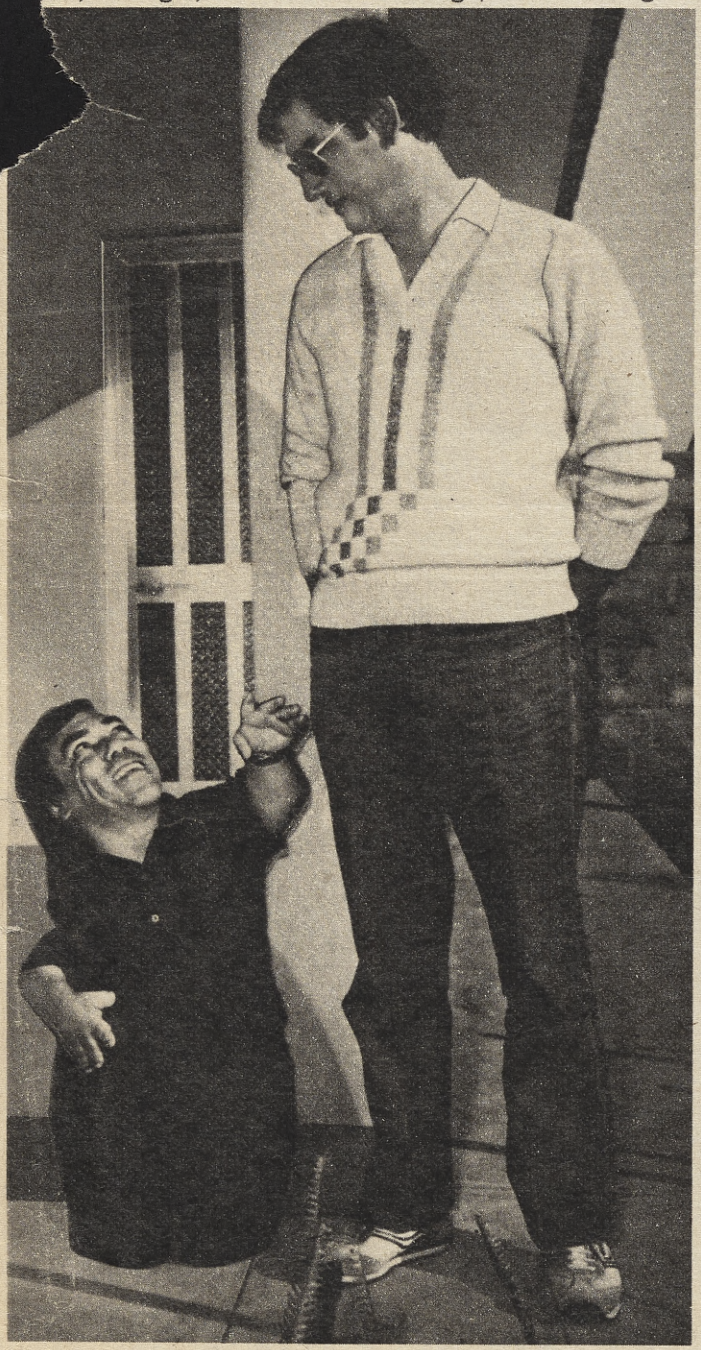
Colin Smith of the Guinness



**TALL ORDER:** Antonio Ferreira has a tough time when he wants to use a regular phone booth.

Book of World Records commented: "Antonio Ferreira is the smallest man in the world."

"We confirmed this last month."



**LITTLE BIG MAN:** Antonio's friends tower over him — like this six-footer with him here.



# An Upstairs-Downstairs Love Story

"It's an upstairs-downstairs kind of love story," says 3-foot 9½-inch Huguette Rioux, who lives upstairs in the "Midget's Palace" in Montreal, Canada — while her six-foot-tall husband Rheal Bastien lives in the full-size basement.

The house's upstairs rooms have been specially modified for midgets, with tiny furniture, appliances, bathroom and beds.

And the basement of the unique house features a full-size bedroom and bathroom.

"We don't argue about whether to use the upstairs or the downstairs, it's just habit now," says Huguette, 31, who owns the unique house.

The Midget's Palace, once a full-sized house, was converted into a home for little people in 1913 by three-foot-tall Count Philippe Nicol and his wife Rose, who was 3 feet 8 inches tall.

Except for a full-size living room, everything upstairs is pint-size.

"We sleep downstairs because I really couldn't expect my husband to use a bed that would leave his legs draped over the bottom end," said Huguette.

"Usually I'll eat downstairs with Rheal because I've had more practice coping with a giant's world than any full-sized person has had living in a little people's environment."

The parlor of the Midget's Palace features a tiny two-person couch covered in blue velvet and a pair of scaled-down armchairs, plus a small grand piano on short legs. The bedroom's single beds are only 42 inches long, compared with a 75-inch normal bed. And in the dining room, around a small table, is a group of four 12-inch-high velvet chairs.

The kitchen stove, at a mere 20 inches off the floor, is 16 inches lower than normal. "I feel full-sized in the kitchen," said Huguette.

"It's a nightmare for little people to be forced to stand on a chair to cook — or to reach up and grab something hot off

## 6-Foot Man & 3-Foot 9½-Inch Wife Live in Special 'Midget's Palace'



**SHE'S A TERRIFIC COOK,** says Rheal of his wife. Her talent makes up for the six-footer having to eat with his knees above the table top.

the stove. That's very dangerous.

"Here I've got that problem beat."

The refrigerator, the cupboards and kitchen table are all midget-size and the bathroom has small, specially made fixtures too.

"Sometimes I feel like serving our dinner upstairs," Huguette said.

"So I yell down that dinner is ready and up Rheal comes.

"His knees are almost

tucked under his chin as he sits and eats at the little table."

Rheal, a 45-year-old sales representative, told The ENQUIRER, "I sit there with my legs squeezed up under my face — but so what? She's a terrific cook. It all may seem strange to some people, but to us, it's the most natural and marvelous thing in the world."

The house is a gathering spot for Montreal midgets, who come to discuss the dif-



**REFLECTING** on the difference in their sizes, Rheal combs hair in front of wife's dressing table.

ficulties of being small in a large world, or just to feel normal in a setting that's their own size.

"It makes them feel as though they're in a normal world," said Huguette, who founded and is president of the 350-member Canadian Midgets Assn.

It's not unusual for midgets to marry normal-sized people.

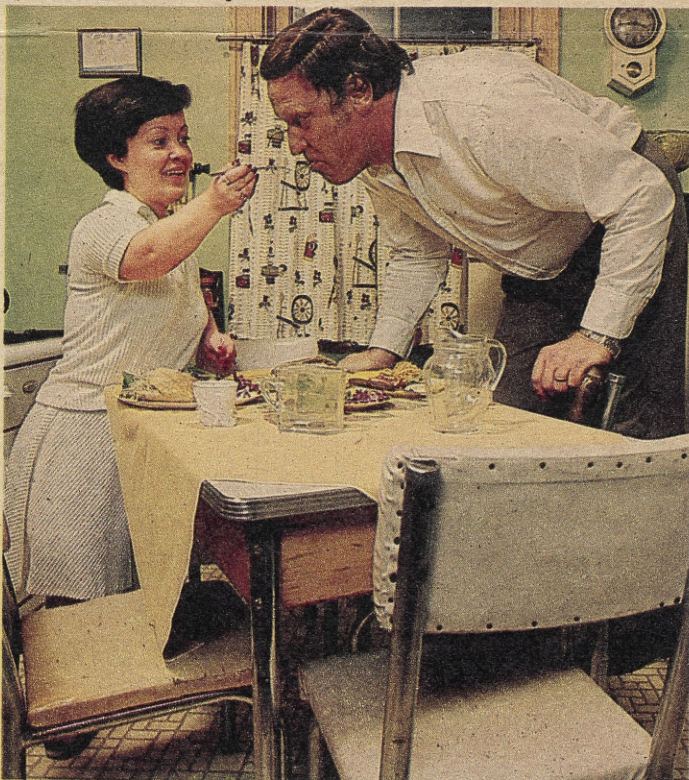
"I'd estimate 75 percent of

little people end up marrying full-size people," said Huguette, mother of 8-year-old Sylvie, also a midget.

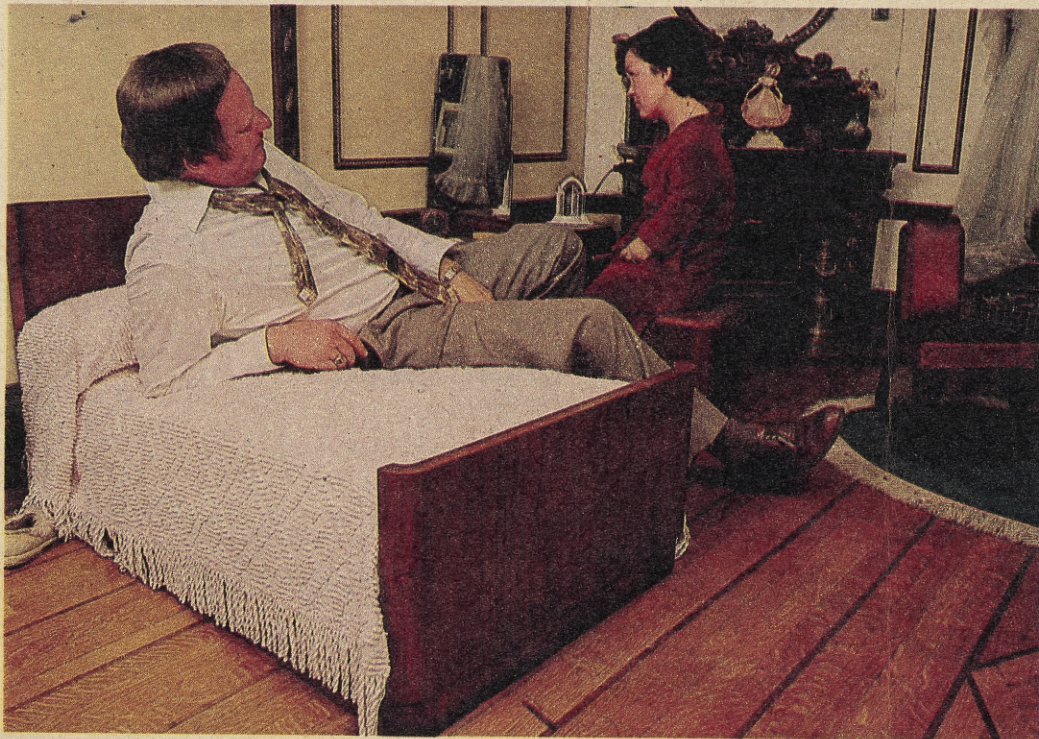
"Our upstairs-downstairs kind of life may seem strange to some people, but for Rheal and me, it's a way for each of us to be happiest.

"At least I don't feel that the world was made for other people anymore!"

— CHRIS PRITCHARD



**TOWERING** Rheal sneaks a quick taste of Huguette's cooking as she stands alongside her kitchen table.



**A SQUEEZE:** Rheal relaxes on wife Huguette's undersized bed.



### Cashing In

A young man told the girl he was dating that his father was old and in very poor health and would probably die soon.

"Why don't you marry me?" the man said. "I'm soon going to be a millionaire."

Two days later the girl became his stepmother.

— Ohio Motorist

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ENQUIRER

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1979



# Smallest cheerleader in America

Allison Queal stands just 3 feet 10 inches tall. But the tiny teen is big in spirit — she is the smallest high school cheerleader in America.

And that's not all!

The 17-year-old dynamo is also editor of her high school yearbook. She acts in school plays and belongs to the National Honor Society.

The cheerleading cherub drives her own customized car, she's traveled to Europe and she's dressed up as a leprechaun for a St. Patrick's Day parade.

"I enjoy everything I do," gushed the Lakewood, Tex., teen.

"I love my friends and all the activities I'm involved in."

Spunky Allison is a dwarf. Medically, her condition is achondroplasia, which is marked by short arms and legs, a normal upper body and normal intelligence.

But the plucky high school senior doesn't let her condition slow her down a bit.

## Little 3-foot-10 dynamo has the heart of a lion

"I'm an optimist," she beams. "When I make up my mind to do something, I do it. Many people give up too easily. I don't."

"If I could tell people one thing, I'd say, 'Give everything a shot. If it doesn't work, so what? Try something else.'"

One of Allison's biggest admirers is Bridget Flanagan, a cheerleading coach at Woodrow Wilson High School in Dallas.

"Allison never stops. She never even slows down," marveled Bridget.

"She's always in motion — and she's a true cheerleader. She urges people on and al-

ways helps those who need it."

When Allison tried out for cheerleading, her mom Pam was worried — but not because she was afraid her

daughter would get hurt. "I didn't want her to be chosen just because she was little and cute and looked like she ought to be everybody's mascot," Pam frankly admitted.

But when she saw Allison perform, her doubts disappeared.

"She was really good," said Pam, a widow and mother of two normal-size children.

Allison is the smallest high school cheerleader, according to the International Cheerleading Foundation. But despite her stature, she does nearly everything the other girls do.

"But they don't put her on top of cheerleading pyramids," said her mom. "It's



SPUNKY Allison Queal cheering during a basketball game. She gets no special treatment.



ALL FOR ONE: Allison says, "when I make up my mind to do something, I do it!"

not because she can't do it, but because her weight is so compact she's actually harder to balance than someone taller.

"Sometimes when I watch her on the field cheering, I choke up."

"There's a big heart inside that little girl."

At school, Allison rides the elevator because she can't climb stairs.

She also has an extra set of textbooks so she doesn't have to carry heavy books home each day.

But besides that, she's treated like any other student.

"No one feels sorry for her, partly because she doesn't have a 'poor me' attitude," said Bridget.

"She's not singled out or given special favors, nor does she expect any. She's really unique."

— S.D. HUBBARD

## Midget, dwarf and little person

I am writing this letter to express my viewpoint of the letter published on Wednesday, May 6, "Question of midget and dwarf." I, myself, am a "little person" (term preferred) and have been called a midget as long as I can remember. I feel this term is very insulting and of poor character. I would much rather be referred to as a dwarf or little person, preferably, "little person."

Every day (speaking for myself), I deal with people in our society pointing and saying, "look at that midget." Whether you're abnormally proportioned or not, we are all human beings (big or small), and we are all God's handiwork.

Your reader did do her homework and looked up the two definitions of dwarf and midget. However, her statement, "Maybe it is his brain

that is small in size," was actually stating her mentality, which I feel is "very small"! I think a lot of remarks from the "average-size person" merely reflect lack of knowledge or just plain stupidity.

Little people have enough to deal with just trying to function daily in a "big world," which is obviously not accommodated for our needs. I believe if little people were acknowledged more in our society, everyone would have a clearer understanding of our stature. I hope that anyone who may read this article will think before speaking next time, and be more considerate of others (big or small) before labeling them.

Wanda Barber-Johnson  
14186 Patin Dyke Road  
Ventress

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## Second Front Page

Sun., July 27, 1980 B1

# The 'little people'

### They're just like everyone else, but with 2 worlds — the big and the small

By Norma Meyer  
Staff writer

Nineteen-month-old Neno Carlino is amused, then scared, then perturbed as he travels nine floors in a crowded elevator at the Pacifica Hotel crunched between a dozen pair of legs.

"He feels like we do in an elevator with normal-size people," jokes his 3-foot-5-inch mother to her surrounding peers.

For years, victims of dwarfism have been associated with Snow White's cutesy entourage or, worse, mysterious freaks in sideshows.

As children, they're called runts by school mates, and as adults, they're stopped in stores by inquisitive children and patronized or ignored by those ill at ease with them.

But in the last 15 years, little people (the name they prefer) have come a long way medically and emotionally. And that's why some 600 came together last week in Culver City for the 22nd annual Little People of America convention.

"We're the same as everybody else, except we live in two worlds — the big world and the small world," said 3-foot-9-inch actor Billy Barty, who in 1957 founded what is now a 5,000-member organization. "We can't hide from either world.

"There's a lack of knowledge about who we are and what we do. We've proved ourselves. We have college degrees and we're in all kinds of professions. Now we have to have the other world accept us."

### Only difference is a few feet

There are about 100,000 Americans who are 4 feet 10 inches and shorter, Barty said. The medical term for them is dwarfs, although there are 80 syndromes of dwarfism.

But little people have normal intelligence and a normal lifespan; indeed, if there was one phrase mentioned by the little people in informal conversations with a visitor, it was "just like normal-size people."

Their main concern is to dispel myths that little people are incapable of functioning in a world where bigger always seems better. Look, they say, pointing at various members milling around the hotel lobby.

There's an accountant, a mechanic, a steelworker, a teacher, a test engineer on a nuclear submarine.

Of course, this was a convention and hundreds of little people or parents and spouses of little people from throughout the country were there to socialize, too.

And as conventions go, this one was a dilly, with some heavy-handed politicking for the office of a new Little People of America president, trips to Disneyland and Beverly Hills homes, baseball games and arm wrestling, costume parties and fashion shows and job recruitment by government agencies and an insurance company (whose pamphlets scattered across a table read, "We are Growing").

"The main event here is social," said 24-year-old Deb Hecht from Indiana. "When you're dancing, it's a lot nicer to be able to look someone in the eye."

Barty recalled his own love story. "I saw Shirley for about 10 minutes at the '60 Las Vegas convention. We were married two years later."

In between, however, there were workshops for parents, for teens, for the engaged and newly married, for the job-seeking.

"People think the only world left for the little people is show business," said Barty, who is supposed to begin rehearsal this week for the movie "Under the Rainbow."

"But only one percent of little people are in show business. The rest lead normal lives."

"Hi," interjected Mary Lou Matthews of Topeka, Kan., extending her hand. "I'm married to Shorty the Tailor but he couldn't come."

"We're a very positive-thinking organization," added Barty, as children (called "little littles") tugged at his shirt and slapped his hand in greeting.

Little people, says Lee Kitchens, former president of the organiza-

### Look on positive side

tion, have learned to work around "inconvenient" barriers such as too-tall pay telephones, drinking fountains and steps.

Cars? No problems, says Kitchens, who has four pairs of extenders for his car's brake and gas pedals,

including one he carries in a briefcase while traveling.

Planes? Cinch, says Kitchens, who also has extenders for a small plane he and his wife owned.

Motorcycles? Snap, says Jack Carlino, who added extensions to his bike.

There are other barriers not so easy to conquer: the attitudes of bigger people. They often show up when a little person looks for employment.

"I've applied or interviewed for 125 jobs since January," said Jimmy Loyless, a 26-year-old sales manager from Atlanta.

"You have to stay psychologically motivated or it's easy to hit the skids. You have to work a little harder, try a little harder."

### Shared experiences

At a convention workshop, a psychiatrist from County Harbor-UCLA Medical Center was speaking in vague terms about being assertive. Deal with things when they happen, don't let them build up, etcetera, etcetera.

It seemed like the post-breakfast blahs had overwhelmed the seminar until a middle-age little person raised his hand.

"What do you do with a patronizing response?" he asked Dr. James Brust. "When it's half-sympathetic, half-aggressive and you know that individual isn't sincere. Most usually it's a potential employer."

Yea, came the resounding response from the awakened audience.

The experienced Loyless answered for the psychiatrist.

"If I'm getting the vibes that someone's uncomfortable with my short stature, it's better to say what you feel about yourself being of short stature," said Loyless in his calm Southern drawl. "He might want to know how you'll interact with co-workers, if you'll feel withdrawn after you're hired."

Dr. David Silence of County Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, which has one of a dozen clinics nationwide researching and treating little people, said they can be divided into two groups.

Little — B2, col. 1



Jack Carlino, above, hoists son, Neno, for a better view. Below, a little person throws it to first base at convention softball game. And Ed Dailey, father of a little person, talks with actor Billy Barty. Dailey is down on one knee as a courtesy to Barty.

Photos by Dan Anderson and staff photographer Michael Steinbacher



# Little

**From page B1**

Little people who have proportionate bodies generally suffer from a deficiency of a growth hormone, he said. Sometimes, hormone shots can stimulate growth.

Those with disproportionate bodies, such as larger heads and smaller limbs, suffer from a skeletal disorder. Knowledge of most of the causes as well as cures are years away.

Each of the 80 syndromes of dwarfism has its set of problems, such as speech and hearing difficulties, arthritis and other problems related to underdevelopment of the bones, said Dr. William Horton, a convention representative from the clinic at the University of Kansas Medical Center.

## Children as dwarfs

Children are another problem.

Horton says some little people cannot conceive, while those with some other syndromes have a 50 percent chance of having a dwarf if they marry a dwarf and a 25 percent of having a little person if they marry someone of average stature.

Little people with growth hormone deficiencies rarely pass on dwarfism to their offspring, he said.

Intermarriage of some strains lessens the child's chances of survival.

"Doctors said we couldn't have a baby," said 23-year-old Jack Carlino, slinging' blond, blue-eyed Neno over his shoulder. "That's the main thing that got us. We didn't believe what the medical records said."

"We were brought up to believe we could have anything we wanted," said Neno's mother, Ann.

"As long' as we go for it," interrupted Carlino, who drives a forklift and carries heavy boxes in his job as a shipping clerk.

Psychiatrist Brust says many little people prefer to have little children because they feel they can control them better.

Said Kitchens, "The problem is when normal-sized people learn their child is a little person.

"Sure, they're not going to play football," said Kitchen, father of an adopted 20-year-old little person daughter and an adopted 24-year-old son who doctors misdiagnosed as a little person and now stands 5 feet 7.

"The parents will be constantly surprised what their kids can do if they're not treated special or like mascots or pets," Kitchen said.

Al Stickney, a little person, conducts a support group in San Francisco for average-size parents and average-size siblings of little people.

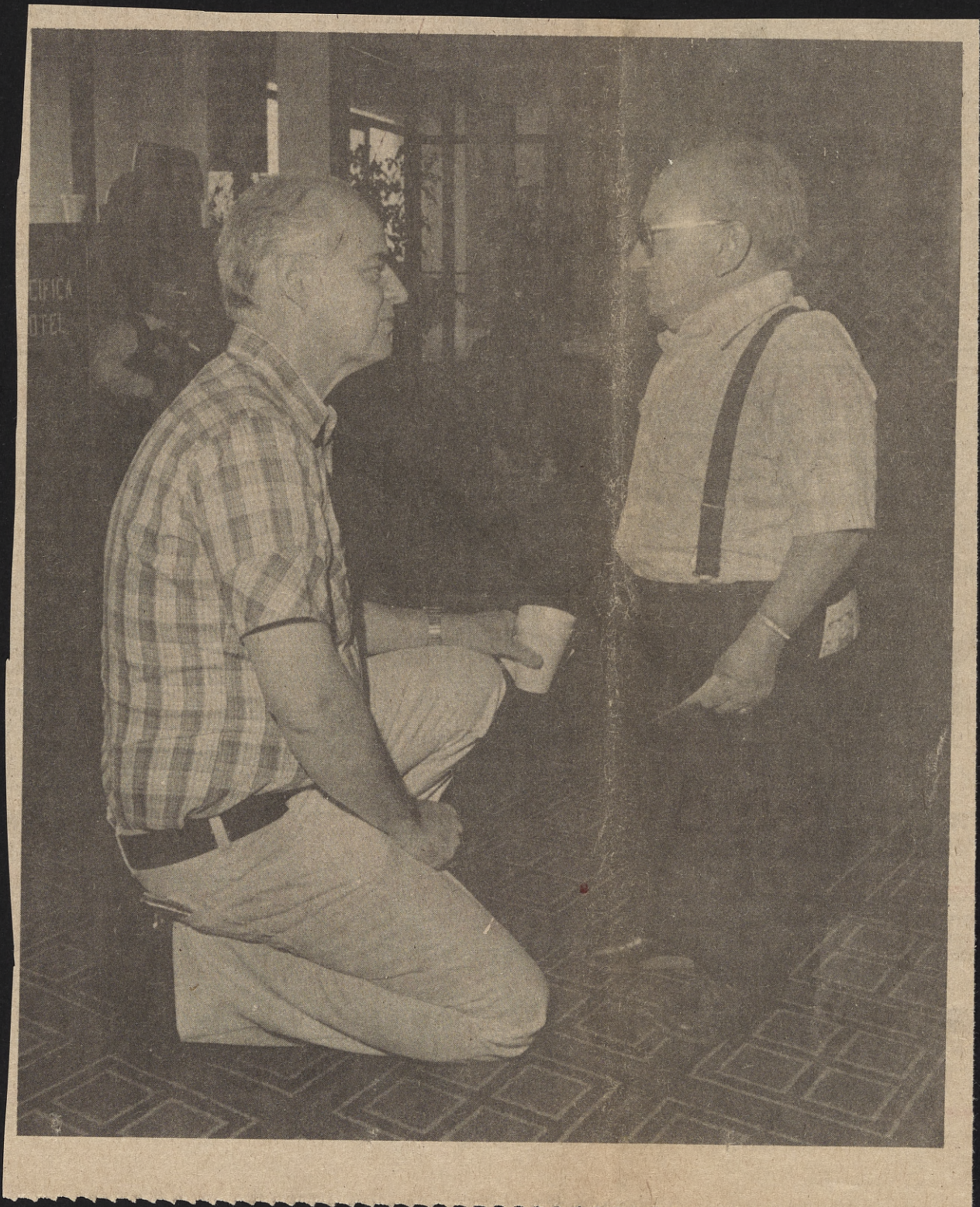
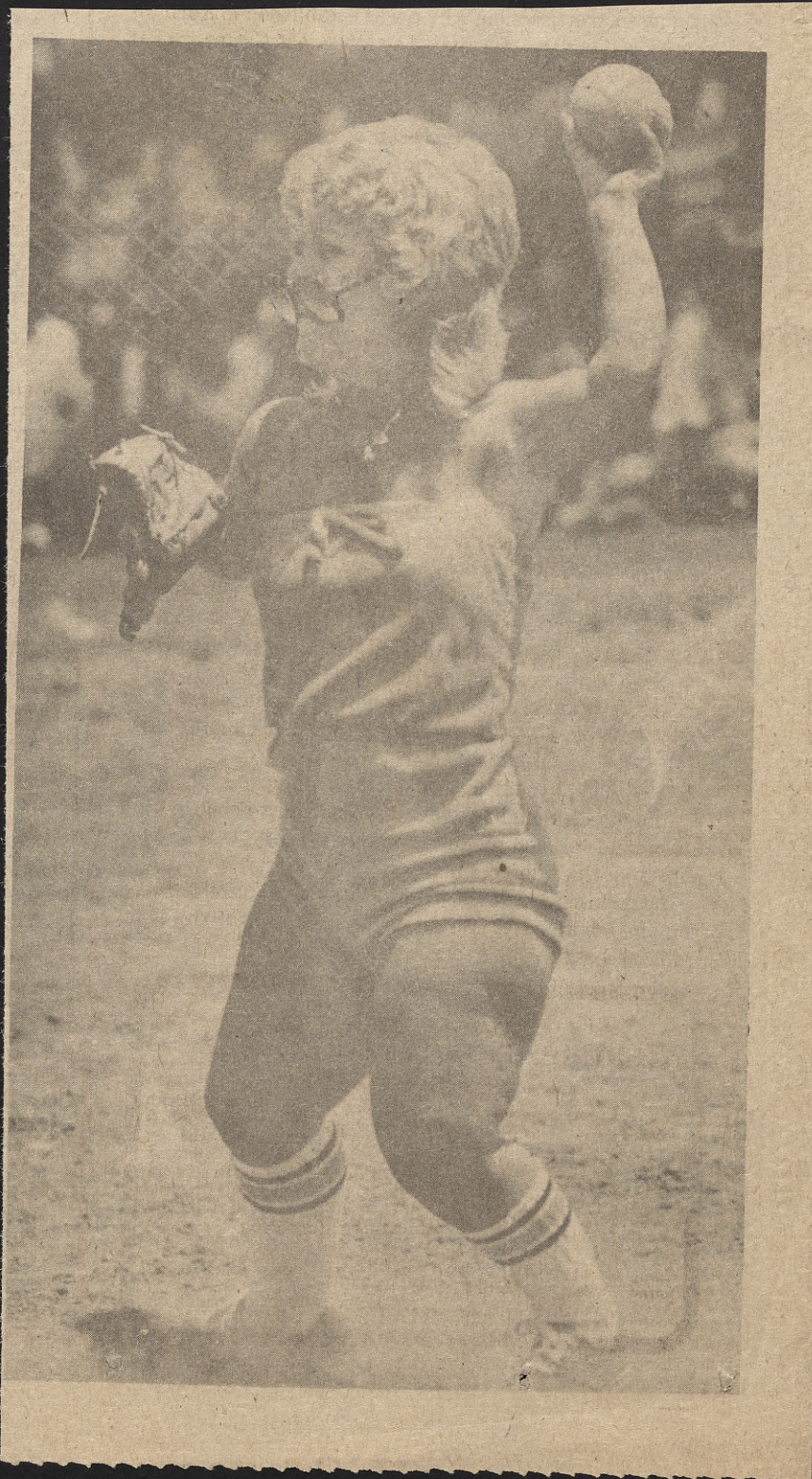
"There may be problems, especially if the little person is the oldest. They're no longer the big brother or sister," said Stickney, who was born to average-sized parents and has a sister 5 feet 8 inches tall and a nephew who is 6-feet-2.

Delores Vercellino, a bubbly, talkative little person, takes out a snapshot of her normal-size, 15-year-old son.

"See, those are my eyes," she said. "You should have seen me and my husband (also a little person) at the Portland convention with Jimmy when he was 5."

She giggles looking back on those times, but the smile briefly fades as she remembers others.

"Sure, there were times when everything would be OK at home with him and his friends and then we'd go out and he'd feel uncomfortable. Everyone has to adjust."





# She's Only 33 Inches — But Mom Stands 10 Feet Tall

She's only 33½ inches tall, but Gloria Hurd is a real giant. Twice she's risked her life giving birth to 18½-inch-long babies . . . each more than half as long as she is!

"I'm the happiest woman in the world! I've got my two wonderful children and I'm as tall as I ever need to be," declares 30-year-old Gloria.

"What I want my kids to learn from me is this: It doesn't matter if you're handicapped.

"Whatever you want to do in this world, you can do it if you keep driving and never quit."

Today both of Gloria's children — 6-year-old Anthony and 2½-year-old Andrea — are taller than their mother.

"My mom's the biggest little person I ever saw," Anthony told The ENQUIRER. "I don't care about her being little. She can do the same things other people can do, and even better sometimes. I'm really proud of my mom and I love her!"

But if Gloria had listened to doctors, neither Anthony nor Andrea would be alive today.

"There was a lot of serious risk that having either of these children could have killed me," Gloria told The ENQUIRER. "Before Anthony was born, I went to a specialist and he suggested that I abort the baby! Imagine that! How could I abort him, after I had already heard his heartbeat?"

"I knew that was my baby and I was determined to have him, whatever the cost."

Gloria's small size created all kinds of problems. Anesthesia was a major one — and Gloria also needed to deliver by cesarean section.

"They told me I couldn't have complete anesthesia because the effect on the child might be too heavy and cause problems like mental retardation," she remembered.

"They didn't tell me until the night before. And then my doctor left the choice up to me. He said, 'We can put you to sleep so you won't feel any pain, but your baby might be born with something wrong.'"

So, at Gloria's request, the cesarean was performed with only local novocaine as an anesthetic.

"I was in agony," she said. "The pain was incredible."

But later Gloria went through the same pain all over again to give birth to Andrea. Dr. David Wallace, the Cleveland obstetrician who delivered both babies, told The ENQUIRER, "Gloria has the heart of a giant. She's an extraordinary woman and a really fine mother."

Gloria and her family now live in the Tampa Bay, Fla., area. She has turned her back on a successful show business career and refused to appear in high-paying TV commercials.

"I vowed that I was not going to use my kids for profit," said Gloria, whose husband Clarence is normal size. "I turned down hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of advertising work endorsing diapers or other infant gear."

Today, Anthony — whose incredible birth story was reported in The ENQUIRER in 1976 — towers 18 inches above his mother. But there are no discipline problems, she said. "He weighs me by five pounds.



**LONG ON LOVE:** She stands shorter than a yardstick, but 6-year-old son Anthony looks up to his pint-sized mom.

If he's doing something he's not supposed to do, I just knock the hell out of him.

"I taught both kids from the beginning — they're the tallest but I'm the



**BIGHEARTED** Gloria doesn't let small size stop her when it comes to raising children.

loves to be carried. "I do it sometimes, but it's pretty hard when her legs are dangling down to my ankles," Gloria said. "The only thing I regret about being a dwarf is that the kids grow up only too fast. It happens to everyone who has kids, but with me, it happens sooner.

"They forget that their mother is a dwarf sometimes. I get the stool out and get up on the counter to put dishes away and then one of the kids will want the stool and run in and get it. There I am, stranded, hollering for them to bring the stool back!"

"Sometimes I'm mistaken for another kid. I hear people say, 'Look at those little kids going across the street!'"

"I'm getting gray-haired now and people say I should dye my hair, but if I did, how could they tell me apart from the kids?"

Being a mother "is a blessed gift," Gloria said. "Those of us who have been allowed to take part in childbirth should show abundant love to our children. God has been very good to me. He not only gave me my children and a happy life, but He sees to it that there is a lot of love in this house.

"And I wouldn't trade all that to be as tall as the Empire State Building!"

Dr. Victor McKusick, chairman of the Department of Medicine at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, says it's "very, very rare" for a dwarf woman to have two normal-sized children. "This lady is one in a hundred million!"

— JOHN BLOSSER

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# 2 years old, but she's only 8 lbs. — and the size of a new baby!

Little Nicola Chappell is a real-life "Thumbelina" — she's 2 years old, yet she weighs barely more than 8 pounds and stands just 23 inches tall.

She can walk and she's just beginning to talk. But, sadly, Nicola will never grow up.

She suffers from a rare form of dwarfism that will keep her forever tiny, just like a little doll.

"I'm scared to even give her a hug," confessed her mother Debbie, 29. "She looks so small and fragile that I'm afraid I'll break her."

"When we walk together, Nicola holds my hand. But I'm afraid to hold on to her tightly for fear I'll crush her tiny hand."

"When she plays with the other children, she gets bumped and jostled. As she tumbles to the floor, my heart is in my mouth."

Debbie and her husband Andrew, who live in the small Welsh village of Meliden, had four normal children before Nicola was born.

"When my kids were young, I used to hold them and wish they would never grow up. I really love babies," Debbie confided. "How I regret ever saying that! Nicola will be a baby forever. It's almost like I put a curse on her."

"It's so odd to see the face of a 2-year-old on a baby's body. And it looks strange for a baby to have long hair."

"Nicola is so small she still wears clothes meant for babies just a few weeks old. But you can't keep a 2-year-old wrapped in blankets and baby clothes. A lot of her clothes are custom-made."

"Nicola is walking now, but nobody makes shoes small enough for her. Babies aren't supposed to walk."

"And she still eats baby food meant for children only a few weeks old. Her throat is so tiny she can't swallow solid foods."

As she gets older, Nicola is encountering even more problems.

She can't be toilet-trained because she'd fall right into the toilet. She still sleeps in a crib meant for a baby — and most of her toys are bigger than she is.

Despite all that, Nicola is happy as a lark and full of curiosity.

"She's really mischievous," her mom revealed. "Because she's so small, she loves to crawl into the tiniest spaces. Her favorite spot is underneath her stroller."

"How she gets under there I have no idea, but once she's there she calls out to me. Then she has a good laugh when I look around pretending I can't find her."

Normal children Nicola's age weigh about 28 pounds, but no one is sure how big she'll get.

"Nicola will continue to grow, but at a much slower rate than average. Our information about this particular syndrome is very limited," said genetic expert Dr. Helen Hughes.

But Debbie added: "There's one thing Nicola isn't short on — love!"

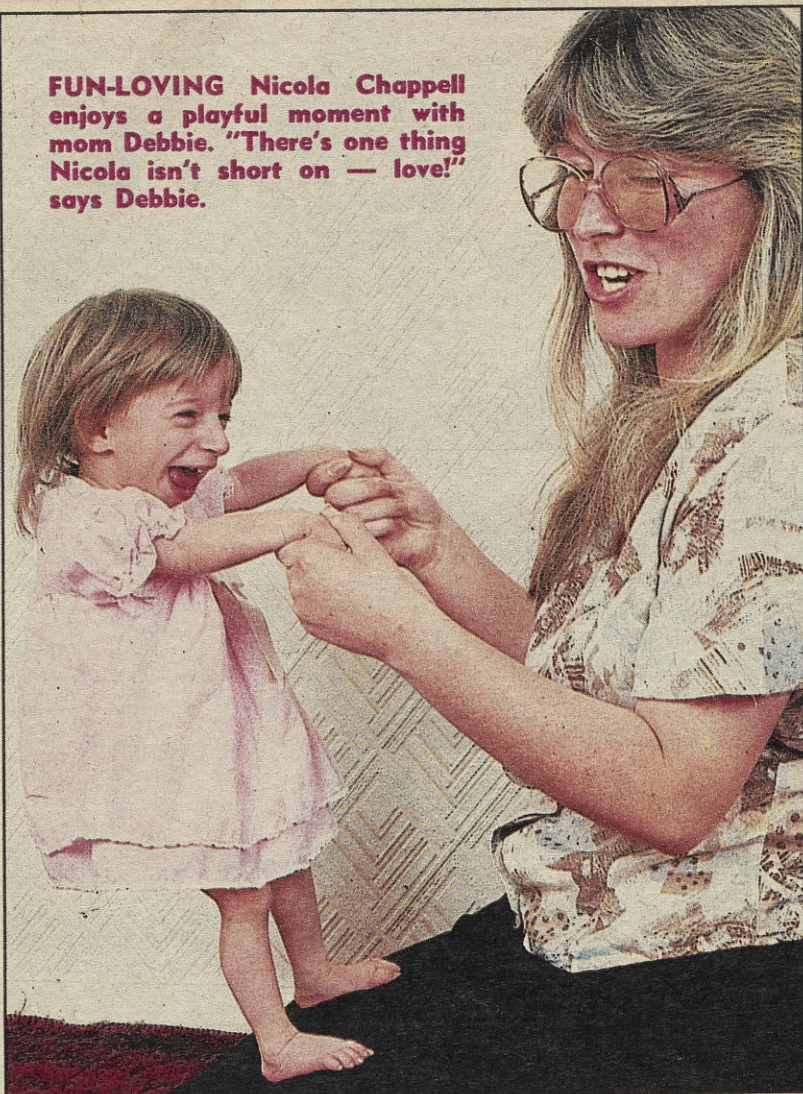
— KEVIN SMITH

**A living doll — & she'll never grow up**

Can you believe these playmates are same age?



**FUN-LOVING** Nicola Chappell enjoys a playful moment with mom Debbie. "There's one thing Nicola isn't short on — love!" says Debbie.





## The Smile Says It For Adam

By **PODINE SCHOENBERGER**  
Science Writer

By the time 5-year-old Adam arrived at the orthopedist's office for treatment, his bones had been fractured 190 times.

The boy averaged several fractures a week.

Some of his bones had been broken even before he was born.

"When you first saw this little boy, it made you wonder," said Dr. Raoul P. Rodriguez, Tulane Medical Center orthopedic surgeon. "Most people would have predicted that Adam would never be able to make it past his first year."

Although he has handled many a case of brittle bones during recent years, Rodriguez said he has never seen anything to equal this.

"This child was born with multiple fractures," he said. "Brittle bones can start in the uterus, you know. How does this happen? Well, it's usually a hereditary ailment which can be transmitted from mother or father to child. Sometimes parents may be brittle-bone carriers, with their own bones remaining intact. Usually, however, a parent's bones are also prone to fractures."

"In the little boy I am talking about, the fractures occurred in arms and legs," Rodriguez continued. "Had it not been for the care and devotion of his mother, he might have had a hard time merely existing. His mother is a wonderful woman. She devotes herself 100 percent to her child's welfare."

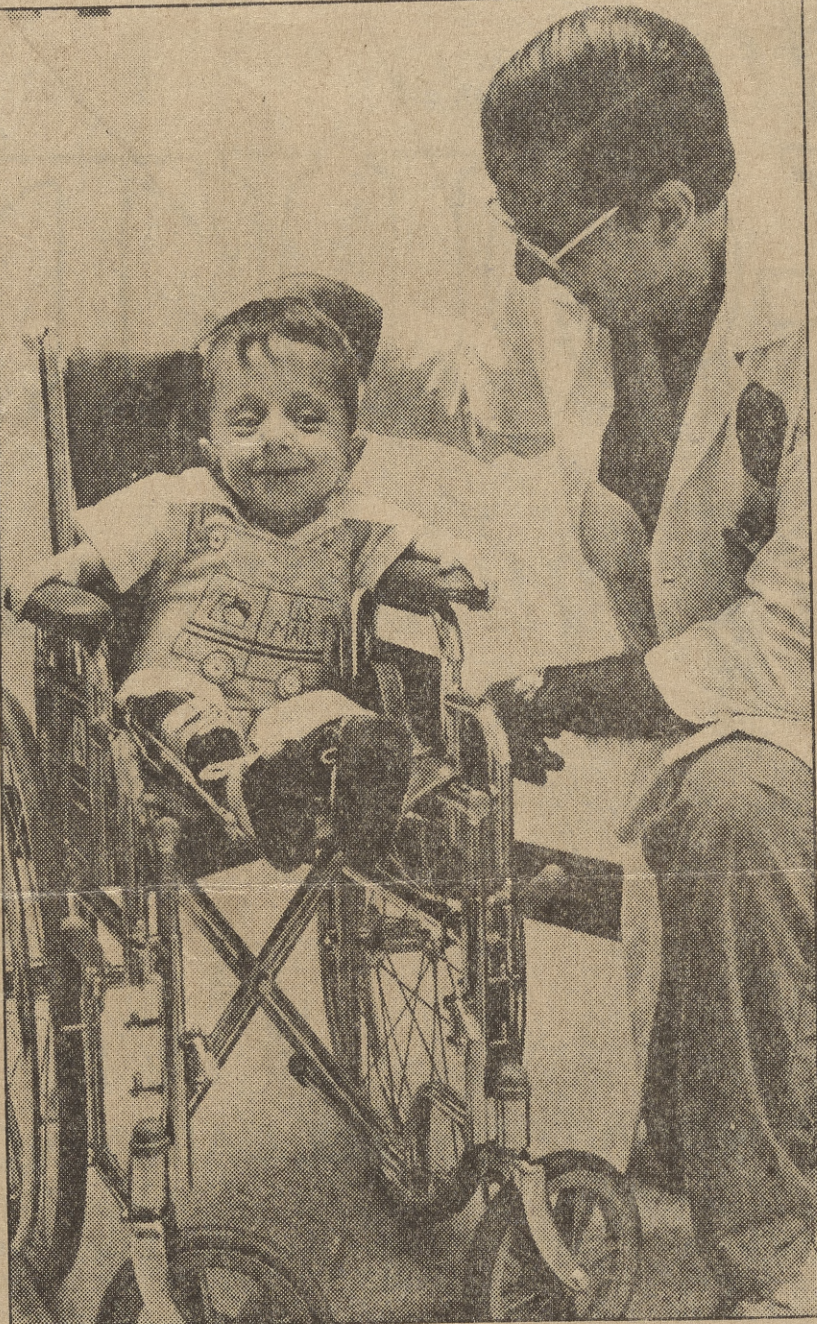
Not only were the young patient's legs crooked as a result of recurring fractures, the fractures themselves were extremely painful, Rodriguez said.

When he agreed to operate on Adam, Rodriguez said it was not only to straighten his legs and, hopefully, prevent fractures, but was also to alleviate the pain.

The operation was performed about a year ago, Rodriguez said. "As a result of this surgery, my young patient can now stand up with the aid of a walker. Before surgery he couldn't even sit, let alone stand."

Rodriguez said one of the most remarkable results of the operation was the change in the boy's personality.

"No longer is he irritable," Rodri-



**Adam And Tulane Orthopedic Surgeon Raoul P. Rodriguez**

guez stated. "No longer do you see him crying with pain. As a matter of fact, he smiles quite a bit and is quite a smart young fellow for his age."

As surgery on Adam's legs got under way, Rodriguez said, metal pins were inserted into his thigh bones as well as the bones extending from knees to ankles.

Since both of his young patient's legs were crooked, the surgeon said, the first thing that had to be done was to break the crooked bones into many pieces, then thread the pieces to stainless steel pins.

These telescoping pins, which are an eighth of an inch in diameter, have the ability to extend as the bones grow, Rodriguez explained. "As the little boy gets older, how-

ever, he might outgrow these steel pins, in which case the pins would have to be replaced."

He said the longer the patient stands on his legs, the stronger his legs will become.

"When hormone changes begin during his teen years, the bones could become even stronger," Rodriguez added.

Rodriguez said Adam is still in a wheel chair and can only walk with the aid of a walker.

"In time he may be able to graduate to crutches," Rodriguez added.

Rodriguez said one of the medical students at Tulane organized a softball game and raised \$400, which was given to the boy's mother to be used for her son's education.





Photo by LEE LAIRD

**BIG HEARTS** — Barbara Ann Stidman and son David, newcomers to Arlington, share a family story. An achondroplastic dwarf, Barbara keeps up with research into her condition

in addition to participating — with her husband and children — in activities of Little People of America through its Dallas-

Friday, August 22, 1980

IRVING DAILY NEWS

Page 3

## Little people 'think big'

By JULIET GEORGE

People of short stature convened in an Arlington home recently to share barbecue, games, jokes, anecdotes...and better ways of coping with a world literally often out of their reach.

Roscoe and Barbara Ann Stidman, who hosted the event, are active members of Little People of America, a multi-purpose support organization formed in 1957. As newcomers to the area, they are now affiliated with the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan chapter of LPA.

Roscoe is a pseudoachondroplastic dwarf. His wife is an achondroplastic dwarf. Some 85 different types of dwarfism restrict normal growth. For some individuals, the blame rests with a malfunctioning pituitary gland; for Barbara and many others, poor cartilage development is the problem.

But the results are the same: unreachable pay phones, difficulty breaking into the job market, commonly held misconceptions and restricted choice in shoes, clothing,

automobiles and so on and so on.

Yet the Arlington couple is acquainted with highly educated little people and long-lived (one man is 89) little people. One of their short-statured acquaintances holds a private pilot's license. And another, unfairly categorized as "retarded" during infancy and institutionalized for 18 years, is now earning an accounting degree.

The area LPA chapter's treasurer, Steve Meyer of Fort Worth, noted that one almost universal blunder made by average persons of average size is use of the insulting term "midget" as a synonym for dwarf.

A slang term from carnival freak show days, it derives from Greek and Latin root words meaning fly or small insect.

While Meyer has no objection to being called a dwarf, he said "midget" hurts a small person the same way "nigger" hurts a black person.

Both Stidmans were lucky enough to be given positive self-images during their early years. Roscoe, who

grew up in Hot Springs, Ark., did not have to "prove" himself as a person until he enrolled at Ouachita Baptist University and met a new set of peers.

He went on to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, served Baptist churches in Arkansas as a youth minister and is preparing to work for the Grand Prairie ISD.

Barbara Ann, who attended the University of Arizona at Tucson and Detroit Institute of Technology, said she did not encounter discrimination until a dormitory resident refused to room with her because of the dwarfism.

But most encounters are happy, the Stidmans acknowledge. They matter-of-factly install pedal extensions in their station wagon, climb supermarket shelves to reach top-row items and varnish portable platforms for the kitchen.

According to Roscoe, the most valuable function of Little People of America has been to provide social life for the short-statured.

For more information about Little people of America, call 572-2942.



He's 6-foot-2 & his living-doll wife is only 3-foot-1

# SHE REALLY IS HIS BETTER HALF!

...& they've won a place in record book

At 3-foot-1, Natalie Pretou is half as tall as her 6-foot 2-inch husband Fabien — but that only makes them love each other twice as much!

The devoted couple won a place in the 1994 Guinness Book of Records for the greatest height difference between a husband and wife — more than a yard!

Together they're big enough to withstand strangers' taunts.

"So what if Natalie is only half my size," declares Fabien, 24. "She has a big heart and that's all that counts. I love her. I don't care what other people think." Added Natalie: "I'm the happiest woman in the whole world."

Natalie, 27, met her beloved Fabien, a train engineer in Grenoble, France, through an electronic message board for computer users. At first, she was afraid to tell him her actual height and said that she was over four feet tall.

Soon, he asked to meet her. And Natalie was terrified.

"What on earth could I do? I'd lied about my size," said Natalie. "When Fabien told me he was 6-foot-2 I wanted the earth to open up beneath me."

But when her "gentle giant" met her at a train station, it was love at first sight. "The instant I saw her, I just melted," gushed Fabien. "She seemed so shy and vulnerable, I wanted to hug her in my arms and look after her forever."

The couple tied the knot on April 14, 1990, and the groom carried the bride over the threshold of the Grenoble Town Hall.

"It was the happiest day of my life," declared Fabien.

The unlikely couple quickly adjusted to life together.

Natalie has a specially outfitted car that allows her to drive. And they bought a baby carriage for Fabien to wheel her around in public.

That way, Natalie doesn't have to worry about keeping up with Fabien's long strides or being stepped on in a crowd.

At the movies Natalie sits on Fabien's lap so she can see the screen. And when they shop for groceries Fabien just pops his better half into the kiddie seat of the shopping cart. "We have a full life," she declared.

*'The instant I saw her, I just melted... I wanted to look after her forever'*



**WEDDING DAY:** Fabien gives his tiny bride a lift.



**DEVOTED COUPLE** Fabien and Natalie Pretou walk with the family dog. "We have a full life together," she says.

Doctors have told them it's possible for Natalie to have a normal-size baby of her own. In the meantime, she pampers the family dog, a champion chow chow that's 95 pounds — 33 pounds heavier than the 61½-pound Natalie.

"If he launches himself at me playfully, I go flying," revealed Natalie. "I have to be careful."

She's also learned to withstand the

heartless comments from inconsiderate loudmouths.

"People can be very cruel," said Fabien. "Either they snicker and laugh or turn their heads in the street, giving amazed stares."

Natalie remembered one humiliating incident at a restaurant when she and Fabien were eating.

A couple of young men came over

and started looking for hidden cameras. Then they asked Fabien if they were part of a stunt for television.

"They bent over laughing when Fabien told them I was his wife," said Natalie.

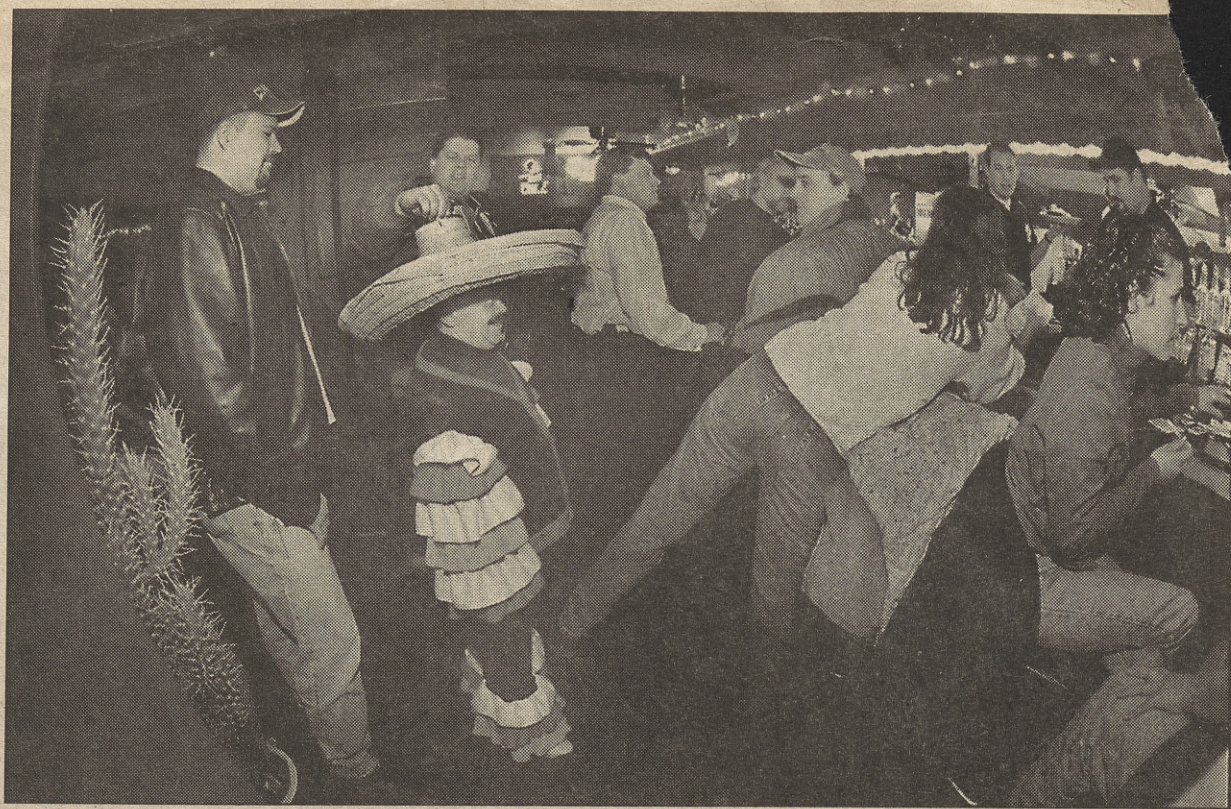
Added Fabien: "Everyone forgets we love each other against all odds, for better or worse. And people's cruelty just makes our own love stronger!"

— JANICE GREGORY



**AGAINST ALL ODDS:** Fabien and Natalie have adjusted to life together.





Scripps Howard News Service photo

Steve Vento serves nachos and salsa from his sombrero at Nacho Mama's in Milwaukee.

## Short order

### Group angry about dwarf's role at restaurant

■ A 4-foot-4 man who previously portrayed the McDonald's Hamburglar says people should have a sense of humor about his job.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

MILWAUKEE — A new Milwaukee restaurant that features a dwarf serving chips and salsa from a modified sombrero on his head has met with outrage from a group for short people.

The restaurant, Nacho Mama's, held its grand opening Wednesday. It features 4-foot-4 Steve Vento as an entertainer and server. Vento, a car salesman, also has worked as a comic. He's previously appeared live portraying characters such as Marc's Big Boy and the McDonald's Hamburglar.

Said Vento: "We've only had one person saying that it was degrading. I told her, 'I don't remember anyone putting you in charge.' We're nothing more than a handful of people having a good time."

Anthony Soares disagreed.

"I think that it's barbaric," said

Soares, spokesman for Little People of America, a nonprofit support organization for people of short stature. "It's humiliating and it's exploiting a disability. It's disgusting."

Soares, speaking from his offices in New York City, added: "It's horrifying to realize that people are still being exploited for their size. You couldn't do that with, say, an Asian pulling a rickshaw. People would say that's racist."

"Short-statured people are often forced into entertainment, and this kind of thing is only going to promote those stereo types," Soares added.

But Ed Lump, of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association, says: "Frankly, it may turn out to be a boon for people with height problems. They might be able to make a lot of money doing this."

The restaurant's owner, Johnny Vassallo, confirmed that the restaurant has had only one complaint so far. Vassallo said he has hired two other short entertainers to fill in when Vento is not available. The 150-seat restaurant features Mexican food and is not affiliated with other Nacho Mama's restaurants around the country,

Vassallo said.

Vento has already proven to be a hit with the patrons who came to Nacho Mama's for its grand opening and for two preview parties, Vassallo said. In addition to nacho rounds, Vento also does magic tricks and makes balloon animals.

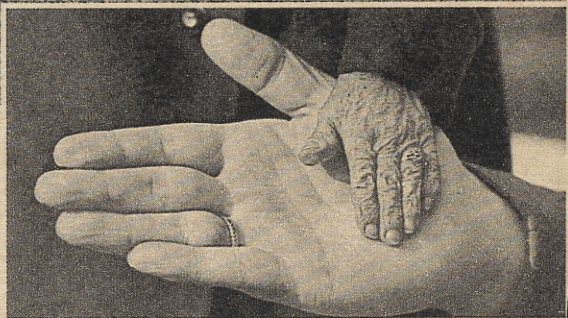
Vento wears a black pantsuit with ruffles in tortilla yellow, queso orange and salsa red on his arms and legs. He said he is paid \$20 an hour, and makes about \$40 to \$60 a night in tips. The straw sombrero is nearly three feet wide, and he some times bumps into the wall as he navigates the narrow walkway behind a row of bar stools. Tortilla chips are piled around the rim of his sombrero. A stainless steel bowl filled with salsa is set in the top of his hat.

"One couple brought in their 3-year-old, who grabbed my hat," Vento said. "Chips went flying and there was salsa all over the wall."

Vento walks from bar stool to bar stool and table to table, telling people to dig in as he makes balloon animals. People grin with a smile. "I don't see anything degrading at all about the people who think it's degrading. They should get a life," said



Germany's tallest man, 7-foot-3 Constantine Klein, recently met up with that country's smallest woman, 3-foot-3 Marie Weiland. And the pair turned plenty of heads as they strolled hand in hand through a Hamburg park.





# 25-year-old man trapped inside toddler's body



**TINY CAPTIVE:** Huang's body is stunted, but his mind is that of a man in his mid-20s.



**W**hen Huang Kaiquan and his younger sister walk down the street, people think she's his mom — because he's the size of a toddler even though he's 25 years old!

Huang stands just 2 feet 6 inches — less than half his 21-year-old sister Wenyi's height — and he weighs a mere 28 pounds.

The little big man is frozen in time, and baffled doctors haven't been able to help him grow.

"He talks like a man, he thinks like a man, but he's trapped inside a baby's body," said a Chinese source familiar with Huang's case.

"And he's not a dwarf. He's just got the body of a toddler.

"He doesn't shave. But apart from that, Huang is normal in every way and has average intelligence."

Huang was born in February 1970 to peasant parents of average height in a village in Szechuan Province, China. Surprisingly, he weighed in at a healthy seven pounds — but at the age of three months he suddenly stopped growing.

He slowly got a bit bigger over the years, but it became obvious he'd never be normal size. He says he was badly hurt when all his childhood friends began towering over him and went on to full lives — leaving him behind.

Huang admits he used to become "very angry" and often sobbed his heart out over his plight.

"God finally answered my prayers. My pain went away," he told the source.

"Now I make the best of my condition. My pleasures are simple: Bringing joy to others by telling jokes, watching TV and playing Ping-Pong. I stand on a crate at one end of the Ping-Pong table and get one of the village boys to play with me."

Doctors suspect that Huang's incredibly rare condition is caused by the failure of his pituitary gland — located in the brain — to produce growth hormone.

"Huang's case is widely known in China, and the government is making arrangements to see if he could benefit from further medical treatment," the source told *The ENQUIRER*.

Although Huang hopes new doctors can help, he's resigned to his fate.

"I know I will never grow up," he sadly told the source.

"It's frustrating. Sometimes it seems the world is a huge party and I have to stay outside and peek in through the doorway."

— REGINALD FITZ

**OVER TWICE HIS SIZE,** Huang's "little sister" Wenyi towers over her 25-year-old brother.



**HE'LL NEVER GROW UP:** At just 2-foot-6, Huang is even dwarfed by a normal 2-year-old (right).



# WORLD'S ODDEST TWINS

You'd never guess it, but this odd couple are . . . TWINS!

John Chivers and Mary Stephenson are inseparable. But when the two reveal they're twins, folks think they're kidding.

Mary is a 5-foot 7-inch blonde — while her 30-year-old twin brother is a 3-foot 11-inch dwarf with brown hair.

They spend lots of time together on Mary's farm in Hobart, Australia. And Mary's two children — 6-year-old Joshua and 3-year-old Molly — adore their Uncle John.

"They love me because I'm an adult who's the size of a child," said John, a bachelor.

"When they saw 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,' they kept saying, 'There's Uncle John! Look, there's lots of Uncle Johns!'"

Even though she's married with children, Mary

still enjoys her brother's company.

"We go for long horseback rides in the countryside," she said. "I ride a big horse and John rides a little pony. We must look pretty strange together."

"But I couldn't wish for a better twin brother than John. He'd lay his life on the line for me."

And John says the twin's difference in height "has made us love each other more. Mary has always been enormously protective of me because I'm small — and I've gone overboard trying to protect her."

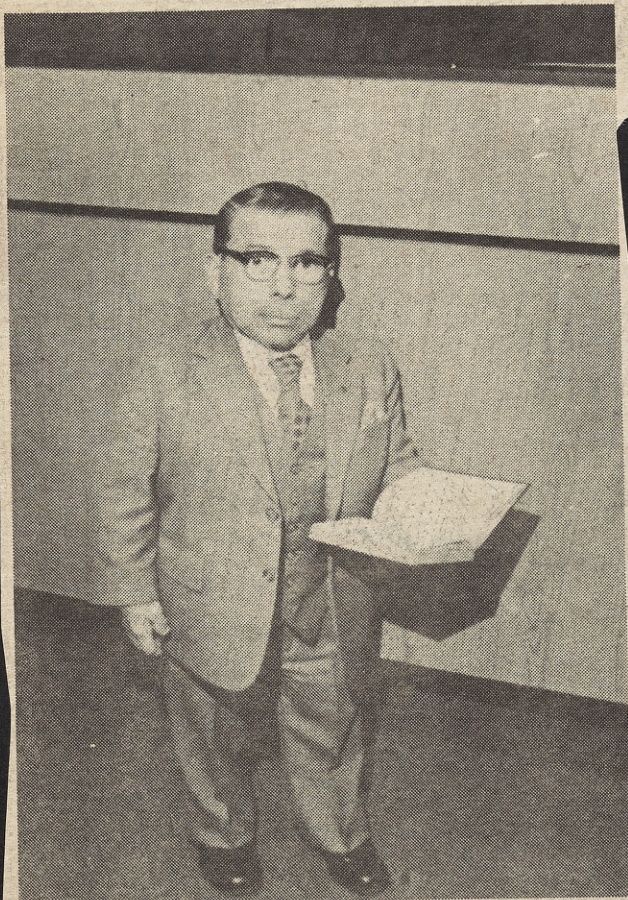
"I've had to show people that, in spite of my size, I can look after my sister!"

— CHRIS PRITCHARD

SHE'S 5-7,  
HE'S 3-11!



1481



## Nation's tiniest judge really packs a wallop!

THE LAW in Morganton, North Carolina, may not have long arms, but it still packs a wallop.

The town of 13,000 boasts the smallest judge in America.

3 ft. 7 in. Robert Hinkson. The 61-year-old justice was named to the bench five years ago, and lawbreakers learned quickly that his short stature doesn't mean he's a soft touch.

"A drunk came into my courtroom once and looked at me in amazement," Hinkson told GLOBE. "Then he said, 'You little runt, you can't put me in jail.'"

The judge immediately

By CHRISTY MCCORMICK

tossed the tippler behind bars "until he sobered up."

Hinkson worked as an accountant in the federal government for 30 years before retiring to Morganton. He has no formal legal education, but he took special judicial training after his appointment.

He hears about 30 cases a day in his small claims court, and is empowered to sentence offenders to up to a month in jail.

Hinkson admits that he faces all the usual headaches little people encounter, such as "often being stuck with children's clothes, which is quite unsatisfactory."

But courtroom discipline is certainly not one of his problems. "People respect me," he says. "or at least they respect my position."



# World's Smallest Man

## He's 21½ Inches Tall & Weighs Just 11 Pounds

Sallih Djail is 23 years old but stands only 21½ inches high and weighs a mere 11 pounds — less than a bowling ball! He's the world's smallest man, so tiny that pals often carry him around in their shopping bags.

The amazing miniman isn't tall enough to see the surface of a regular bed, much less climb onto it, so he sleeps on a baby mattress on the floor of his parents' home in Barika, Algeria.

"If I were to sleep in a normal-size bed, I would feel like I'd camped out in the middle of a football field!" says Sallih, who's nearly seven inches shorter than the smallest man now listed in the Guinness Book of World Records.

His biggest problem, he insists, is that people don't treat him with any respect.

"I'm not a toy — I'm a real-life living doll. And I wish someone would take me seriously for once!" he said in exasperation.

"I'm sick and tired of people thinking I'm a baby. They pick me up, cuddle and kiss me and make stupid cooing noises — as if I can't understand them or speak for myself.

"Sometimes they pull my ears like



**LIVING DOLL:** Sallih, who can't stand being treated like "a toy," with his normal-size dad.

I'm a stuffed toy. If I yell, they're often so surprised I can talk that they drop me!

"I'd like the world to know I can walk and talk and do all the things that normal people do. And I intend to find myself a wife and settle down and have children."

Living in a world of giant people and objects isn't easy, but Sallih says he tries to lead a normal life.

"I'm not big enough to drive a car or even ride a bicycle, but I get around on a baby's tricycle.

"At mealtimes I sit on the table. I eat about four ounces of food, and after that I'm full.

"I wash in a bowl of water on the floor — to me, it seems as big as a bathtub!

"My clothes are made from material left over from my younger brother Amar's shirts. He's 21 and stands 5 feet 9.

"The only ready-made clothes my size are cute baby clothes. I wore those until I was 10, so no thanks.

"Even today, however, I still wear baby's or doll's shoes — my feet are only about 3 inches long, so those are the only shoes that fit."

Sallih was 9 inches long at birth and grew normally until he was 8 months old, but suddenly he stopped. Doctors don't know why, but think his growth may have been halted when his sister dropped him on his head.

"For a long time I banged my head against things and jumped off chairs onto my head in the desperate hope that the blows would shock my body into growing again," he confided.

"But now I've accepted that I'm my adult size, even though it's more like that of an 8-month-old baby.

"Even though my legs aren't even 10 inches long, I manage to keep up with friends by trotting alongside them as they walk. If I get tired, they pick me up and pop me into their shopping bag.

"And when people want to talk to me, I insist that they pick me up so I can speak to them eye to eye. You never know what someone's thinking when you're staring at their kneecaps!"

Sallih wasn't allowed to go to school because officials feared he'd get hurt playing with the much bigger students. Today he spends part of his days helping out in his father's grocery store.

"I tidy up all those hard-to-reach places on the lower shelves, and I sit on the counter and chat with customers," he said.

"I never go to public events — it



**PROBLEMS:** Even easy tasks like using the phone are hard for Sallih.

would be just asking to get stepped on.

"Once I went to the marketplace with my brother, and in the crowd I came face to face with the most enormous dog I'd ever seen — he towered over me. He looked like a gigantic monster.

"Fortunately he was friendly — too friendly.

"He started licking me, and every powerful lick sent me backward until finally I was on my back on the ground, bowled over by this mongrel!"

Guinness Book of World Records spokeswoman Sheila Goldsmith confirmed: "Without a doubt, Sallih Djail is the smallest man in the

world. The current entry in Guinness is Nelson de la Rosa of Santo Domingo, who's 28.3 inches tall.

"As soon as we receive official documentation of Sallih's height, we'll include him in the next Guinness edition."

Says Sallih: "I used to dream of what I'd do when I grew up. Now I realize that I'm never going to grow up.

"My only dream is to find a wife who will love me as I am.

"I'm the smallest man in the world, but I have the biggest heart in the world.

"And if only I could find a girl to love, I'd feel 10 feet tall."

— JANICE GREGORY



# Lifestyle

Wednesday, February 25, 1981

THE TIMES-PICAYUNE /

## They're as tall as they can be

Dwarfs live in an outsized world on their own terms and not as circus sideshow freaks

By KATHLEEN A. MULVIHILL

**W**hen Irwin Royes was a little boy he wanted to be a magician. Now that he is a little man he is doing just that.

Royes is 33 years old and stands 4 feet 3 inches tall. He is one of a small population of little people — midgets and dwarfs — who live in the New Orleans area. Their number is estimated at between 100 and 200.

As a contrast to the days when circus sideshows were one of the few employment outlets for dwarfs, today's "little people" are established in all types of occupations and professions. They no longer are relegated solely to roles designed to amuse "normal people."

Among New Orleans little people are a commercial artist, disc jockey and magician who because of their short stature face some special problems and challenges not incurred by average-sized people, but otherwise live normally in an "over-sized world."

Royes is perhaps one of the more familiar faces among them. He performs on weekends at Fireside Inn, a pizza restaurant in Metairie, billing himself as the "smallest magician in the world."

"I saved my money like crazy to go to the circus to see the clowns and the tricks," said Royes. "I'd go sometimes three, four times a week."

**Royes' dwarfism**, he says, is at least partly a result of a condition called osteogenesis imperfecta, meaning imperfect bone growth. A bone calcium deficiency has retarded his growth and caused frequent bone fractures and breaking.

"I was born with a broken arm," Royes said. "The doctor told my mother I would only live a few years or else I would be confined to a wheelchair."

While Royes was hospitalized once

for surgery on his ankles, "I picked up some tricks from a magician who used me in one of his shows." After Royes showed the magician a few tricks of his own, he was invited to a magic club meeting. By age 20, he was working professionally as a magician, mostly at children's parties, and for the last 10 years has performed on weekends at Fireside Inn.

Gradually, he picked up bookings for private parties — both children and adult — and for trade shows and conventions.

Because of his talent as an entertainer, he has been sought by several circuses, but he is careful to emphasize he would not perform in any type of sideshow. Some people presume, he says, that he'd take any offer just because of his size.

One agent called him to perform at a convention show. "She said they wanted someone 'different looking and novel.' " When he inquired further he was told the job meant dressing up in a costume and following a horse around with a pail and shovel.

"I got this far by being a good magician and I'm not going to throw it away in one day," Royes remarked.

He also turned down an offer as emcee at a strip bar on Bourbon Street.

**Royes describes** his acts as "cabaret-style magic." He encourages audience participation and uses a dove, French poodle, and sometimes a dwarf rabbit as props. His attractive wife Denise, 28, assists him frequently in the shows in addition to her job as a secretary. Denise is a normal-sized person, as are both of Royes' parents.

"In high school I was very height-conscious," Denise conceded, "but all that went out the window when I met Irwin ... I never felt embarrassed with him." Royes acknowledged, on the other hand, of having sometimes felt "awkward dating little people." Together they laugh off what stares

from strangers they may encounter.

Maria Scalia, 32, stands 4 feet, 1 inch tall, but blends into a normal-sized world as a tower of energy. All her friends are average-sized, including men she dates. Some are taller than average; she was once squired by a 6-footer.

Scalia, a commercial artist employed in the advertising department of The Times-Picayune/The States-Item, is a vivacious, independent single woman who owns her own home in Metairie.

She laughs when she recalls a college experience when she was designated for little activity in physical education classes.

"They put me in a class where all they did was play bridge or canasta. I had to get a doctor to sign a form saying I could do normal things." She did and enrolled in regular physical education courses.

**Although Scalia** is pint-sized, nothing in her house is. She needs to

rely only on a few step stools to reach things normally inaccessible to her. She also prefers driving a standard-shift automobile even though it means having an extra pedal extension made.

"My friends ask me 'why don't you get an automatic?' It would be easier, but I have more fun shifting."

Scalia says she doesn't "depend on anybody for anything" because "there are more things to life than being short."

Mostly because of that philosophy she chooses not to get involved with such groups as Little People of America or a local organization called Dixie Lil' High.

"I've never been to a meeting and I don't care to," she says.

Scalia likes to swim, bicycle and play tennis. When she started taking swimming and tennis lessons, she conceded that both instructors initially had reservations about her success. In the end when she proved her abilities, both were just as surprised, she said.

Turn to Section 4, Page 4



Staff photo by Ellis Lucia

**Denise Royes assists her husband, Irwin, a little person who goes over big as a magician;**



# These New Orleans little people are just as tall as they can be

Continued from Section 4, Page 1

"I even played with a guy and tore him up."

Scalia grew up and was educated in Monroe. After graduating with a degree in advertising design from Northeast Louisiana University in 1970 she moved to New Orleans with neither experience nor promise of a job. She landed a job as an advertising artist with a furniture store and then came to work for The Times-Picayune and The States-Item in 1973.

"I went to Catholic school all my life. In grammar school we had all these processions and we all had to line up by size. I was always the first in line. I was so glad when I got to high school because then we went alphabetically."

Both of Scalia's parents are of nor-

mal size as are her older brother and younger sister. She is the first little person in the family's history as far as she knows.

This phenomenon is not unusual. Two normal-sized adults may produce a dwarf child just as two dwarf parents may have a normal child. Mixed parents may have either.

Arturo Gil is another dwarf with normal-sized parents. His brother Ricki is a little person, while another brother is of normal size. Gil, 20, who lives with his mother in a duplex in Gentilly, is a disc jockey at Anything Goes restaurant in the French Quarter. With long blond hair and tinted gold-rimmed glasses, he pretty much looks the role.

Both he and Ricki worked as waiters

at the restaurant at the suggestion of Ricki's wife GeeGee, who also is a little person.

"My sister-in-law knew the manager there, and he said he needed unique people," Ricki later quit for another job, but Arturo stayed on and applied for the disc jockey position when an opening became available.

Does he resent being hired as a 3-foot-7-inch "unique person?"

"If it hadn't been for them wanting unique people," Gil replied, "I wouldn't have gotten a start" as a disc jockey.

He would like to work as a DJ on a radio station or perhaps become a photographer, which is something he does just as a hobby for now.

Gil says being short can be a handicap, but he stresses, "I'm not disabled." He kids about being "a monkey"

since he was a boy. "If I needed something I just jumped up and got it."

Gil was born in New Orleans, grew up in Puerto Rico, then moved back here with his family about seven years ago. It always irked him, he said, when Puerto Ricans patted him on the head. "It was like we were a good luck charm or something."

Recently Gil stood in for actor Billy Barty in a stunt act in "Concrete Cowboy," a movie filmed in New Orleans. Barty is founder of Little People of America.

Gil says he enjoys the camaraderie of the Little People of America and tries to attend its annual conventions.

Also active in LPA and the local Dixie Lil' High are Debra Villarrubia and Diann LoCicero, president and sec-



Staff photo by G. Andrew Bcyd

retary-treasurer respectively of the latter organization. Both encourage little people to join the group, which has attracted only a dozen members or so since it was formed about five years ago.

But some, like Scalia, say they don't need to make a big production of their lives because they are small.

Some, in fact, refused to be interviewed on the principle that they are normal people leading normal lives and felt there was no reason, therefore, to spotlight them.

One mother whose daughter is a little person and graduated as valedictorian of her high school class, put it this way:

"My daughter doesn't feel that whatever she accomplishes should be praised just because of her size."

Royes and Gil pretty much hold to that philosophy as well. The difference is that they would simply like to dissolve the mystique and public curiosity about themselves.

Royes, whose audience is largely children, notes that children may be aware only of his size when he comes on stage, but by the time he works his magic on them, they are applauding him only as a magician.

"Give me all the kids in the world. If they're inquisitive enough to ask 'why are you so small?', I would tell them." And, he says, they would accept him.

It's adults — the hecklers in the audience or drunks at parties — that Royes has learned to ignore, because "I don't want to feel sorry for them. They have a problem, not me."

Arturo Gil on the job as a disc jockey at a French Quarter disco-restaurant.

## Little known about why little people are little

Dwarfism usually results from a combination of genetic factors and endocrine malfunction. It may also be caused by acquired conditions such as kidney disease.

Pituitary dwarfism is caused by an insufficiency of the pituitary growth hormone. The pituitary dwarf typically stops growing in early childhood, but retains normal body proportion and mental capacity. This type of dwarf, who is normal except for size, is commonly called a midget.

Achondroplastic dwarfism is believed hereditary and accounts for about half of the country's dwarf popu-

lation, which is estimated at 20,000 — or approximately 1 in every 100,000 births. Typically, the growth of the limbs is stunted, but the trunk is of normal size and mental capacity is normal. Humans who range in height from two to four feet generally are classified as dwarfs.

One of the most famous dwarfs in history was "General Tom Thumb," an American entertainer born in Bridgeport, Conn. His career began in 1842 when showman P.T. Barnum gave him his title and arranged with the parents for his exhibition as a midget. He was then less than 2 feet tall and grew to

only 33 inches. Barnum aroused the curiosity of people throughout the world by skillful publicity and satisfied this curiosity through profitable display of the general in several countries, bringing Tom Thumb wealth and fame. At the age of 10 the general had already been the guest of President Polk, Queen Victoria, Isabella of Spain and King Louis Philippe of France.

Dr. Steve Kopits, an orthopedic surgeon who specializes in research and treatment of dwarfism at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Maryland, says there still is "very little knowledge" about it.

There are at least 80 classifications of dwarfism, he says. He works with 35 types at the hospital, at which research in and treatment of dwarfism has been pioneered.

Locally, Dr. Alain Cracco, also an orthopedic surgeon, is sought out for treatment by the community's little people. He and his wife are involved in the little people's organization here since their 8-year-old daughter is one.

"We appreciate the little people's organization," he says, because it provides a chance "for parents to be able to talk with others and to prepare our children" for their lives.



**Only 25<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Inches Tall, She's the . . .**

# World's Tiniest Woman

Madge Bester is 25 years old but she stands only 25<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches high. She's the world's shortest woman — so small that when she goes to the market with her brother, she rides in the shopping cart's baby seat!

"Even a 3-year-old girl towers over me," chuckled Madge.

"When I try to see an age-restricted movie, they won't let me in because they think I'm a child — then when I show them my ID, you should see their faces!"

"You know that old saying, 'knee-high to a grasshopper'? Well, I'm just a little bit taller than that."

Madge — who'll be included in the next edition of the Guinness Book of World Records — weighs only 53 pounds. She was born with a rare condition commonly known as brittle bone disease. It stunted her growth and left her unable to walk, although she can stand if she holds on to something.

But she refuses to let her small size get her down.

"From the time I realized I was different, I made up my mind I'd live a normal life — and I'm doing pretty well so far," she told The ENQUIRER. "I may look like a child, but inside my head, I'm a grown-up person."

Madge, who lives in Warrenton, South Africa, does admit that some things normal-size people take for granted are enormous challenges for her.

"Going shopping, going to the bathroom, eating a meal — all these things are tough for me. But every time I'm faced with a challenge, I grit my teeth and try to figure out a way."

She gets by on a government pension — and fortunately, she doesn't have to spend a lot of money on clothes or food.

"I buy kiddie's clothes — a child's shoe size 6 and dress size 12 usually fit. And because of my small size, I have a very small appetite. If I tried to eat a normal person's portion of food, I think I would burst," she said.

But getting around can be a problem.

"I am much too short to drive a car. Even using a pile of cushions, I can't see over the steering wheel. I tried it once and we had to put so many cushions on the driver's seat, the pile toppled over."

"Now I have two wheelchairs to get around."

Elevators are another big problem for pint-size Madge.

"Usually, I can't even reach the lowest buttons and I have to wait for another passenger to come along before I can ride."

"But it's not all bad being this short — if I'm in a hurry to get somewhere, I just ask to be carried."

"In olden days, only the most important people were carried, so I guess that makes me a VIP."

Because she's so little, Madge has a great rapport with children — and says

25-YEAR-OLD Madge is dwarfed by normal-size 3-year-old girl. Madge was born with a rare condition known as brittle bone disease.

***'It's Not All Bad Being This Short — If I'm in a Hurry to Get Somewhere, I Just Ask to Be Carried'***



she'd love to get a job working with kids. "Children immediately accept me and want to play with me — and it's my great dream to work with very young children. But they'd have to be young because once they start toddling, I can't keep up with them. Even

though I pride myself on being bright and happy, there are days when I get depressed and wonder why God made me this way. But at least now I'm a world record holder — and I'll be famous."

— DAVID BARRITT



# TINY TEACHER STANDS TALL

She's only 3-ft.-9!

... But she's a BIG hit in third grade

At only 3-foot-9, Marcia Clark is so tiny she has to use a set of steps to reach the blackboard in her third-grade class — and she's the teacher!

"I'm about the same size as the first graders, but by the time they get to my class, around age 8, they're way over my head," said Marcia, who weighs only 62 pounds.

It's an incredible reversal of the hit movie "Kindergarten Cop." In the film, muscleman Arnold Schwarzenegger played a police officer who became a kindergarten teacher, towering over the kids.

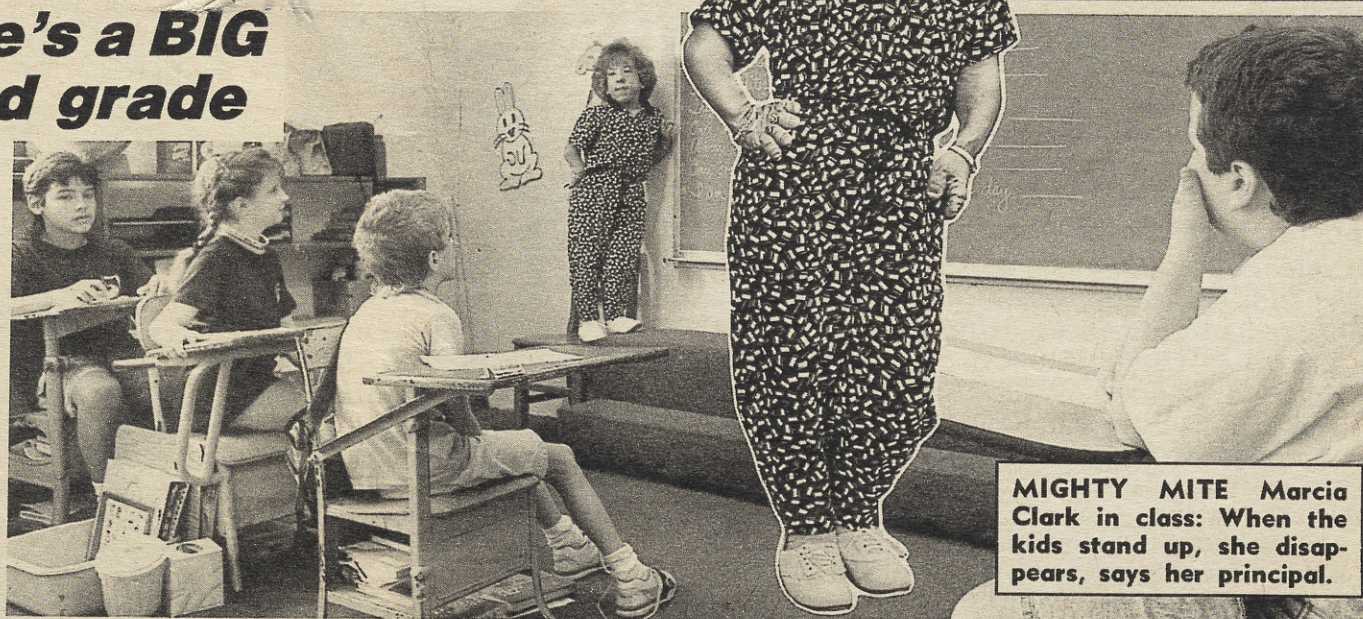
Arnold's boss in the movie was a pint-size principal

played by petite actress Linda Hunt. But at Myrick Elementary School in Laurel, Miss., where Marcia

teaches, the principal is 6-foot-tall Tommy Parker.

"I have to hunt real hard to find Marcia every time I

go into her classroom," says Parker. "When the kids are sitting down, she's the same height they are. And when



**MIGHTY MITE** Marcia Clark in class: When the kids stand up, she disappears, says her principal.

they stand up, she disappears!"

Marcia, 37, is not only an extraordinary teacher, says Parker. "She also plays the piano, sings solo in the church choir, supervises the school's cheerleaders and drives her own car."

"One of the biggest problems I have is deciding which kids get to go into Miss Clark's class every fall. All the parents want their third graders in her room."

Marcia was born with a bone deficiency called achondroplastic dwarfism. It caused her to stop growing, and she still wears children's clothes.

She said she'll never forget her first day as a teacher at Myrick Elementary. The school bell rang, signaling the start of the day's classes, and the elderly principal at that time began yelling to all the children in the office: "Everyone out!"

"He looked at me and said, 'You'll have to buy your pencils later. Out with the other kids!'" Martha recalled.

"But Mr. Smith," I sputtered. "I'm Miss Clark, the new teacher!" He went crimson. "I'm so sorry," he said. "I thought you were one of the children."

"Becoming a teacher is the best thing that ever happened to me. I love teaching and I love the kids — even if they do tower over me."

— JOE MULLINS

## Magical BIG DAY for 2 little people in love

"I feel ten feet tall!" declared 2-foot-11 Mike Henbury only moments after marrying his 4-foot bride Debbie Spicer.

Mike stands only about half as high as his best man — his 5-foot-7 twin Malcolm — but the little groom is definitely a big man in Debbie's eyes . . . because he's the one who made her dreams come true.

"I used to dream of a white wedding like other girls, but I thought I would never find someone to love me," she said. "My wedding day was

**'I didn't have to get down on one knee to propose,' jokes 2-foot-11 groom**

the happiest day of my life!" The pair met three years ago after Mike, a 32-year-old customs officer, caught Debbie's eye at a party given by fellow dwarf Warwick Davis, who starred in the fantasy film "Willow."

A few days later, they went out on their first date to a pub in their hometown in Surrey, England, and "it was magic," Mike said. "At the end of the evening, we had our first kiss and I knew I was in love."

Ten months later they got engaged.

"I didn't have to get down on one knee to propose," joked Mike.

And that sense of humor was what won Debbie's heart.

"I used to get depressed because I thought I'd never find that special person," said Debbie, a 22-year-old insurance broker. "I thought I'd end up alone."

She wasn't the only one who felt that way.

"We were both terribly lonely," said Mike. "People think dwarfs don't have hearts and feelings like everyone else. But we have the same desires and needs as other people."

Just like any other couple, Mike and Debbie had stars in their eyes when they wed on June 1.

"We're both looking forward to the sound of little feet," said Mike. "We love children and want to raise a family."

Despite the couple's size, experts say they could have children who would grow to a normal height.

In fact, Debbie sees only one main problem in the couple's future: "Keeping us slim," she said. "Dwarfs have normal appetites, but tiny tummies. I don't want to have a small, fat husband!"

— ALAN MacFADYEN



**BIG BROTHER** Malcolm, who was best man, towers over the groom — but the two are actually twins.



**NEWLYWEDS** Mike and Debbie Henbury close their eyes against a shower of confetti. Still laughing (top), the groom prepares to throw his bride's wedding garter to the guests.

### Folks would give up ice cream, pizza or chocolate before meat

If there was one food you would never give up, what would it be? That was the question 1,000 consumers were asked in a recent survey — and the top food they insisted on keeping was

meat. It was followed, in order, by fruits and vegetables, bread, pasta, ice cream, potatoes, pizza, milk, chocolate and cheese, according to the U.S. Distribution Journal.



## Dwarf mom with ton of love beats red tape to adopt dwarf daughter

Brenda Covington is a dwarf who wouldn't let a mountain of red tape stop her from adopting a 2-year-old dwarf child to love. And after a courageous 18-month battle — she brought her little girl home.

"It's always been my dream to adopt a dwarf girl," says the 31-year-old Houston woman. "No one knows what she's going to have to go through in her life like I do — the taunting, the name-calling, the discrimination . . . I can be there to help."

Today, a happy Brenda can't imagine life without Elizabeth, her blonde, blue-eyed bundle of joy.

"It seems like she's always been here," beamed Brenda. "It was just meant to be. I love this little girl."

The plucky 4-foot-3 Brenda decided she wanted to adopt a dwarf child about 10 years ago. But it wasn't until 1989 that the unmarried data operator at the Houston power company had the financial security to try parenting.

And that's when her problems began — there were no dwarf babies to adopt in Harris County, Tex. With the help of the Little People of America, a support association for dwarfs and midgets, she found Elizabeth, who was then 7 months old and living in a California foster home.

But when she inquired about adopting her, California officials said the baby was too sickly for a single parent to adopt.

The would-be mom completed the necessary paperwork for adoption. But stubborn officials stood firm — they continued to doubt her ability to care for the baby and keep her job at the same time.

"Her foster mother had taken her back and forth to the hospital that first year," recalled Brenda. "She had been up nights with her. They really questioned me: 'What was I going to do when this child was constantly sick?'"

"I had to go to my boss and explain the situation to her. She had to write a letter that said I wouldn't be fired if I took off time for my child."

Unconvinced, adoption officials

tried to get little Elizabeth's foster parents to adopt her — but they were both in their 50s and felt they were too old to raise a child.

Yet officials still wouldn't give



Happy mom dresses new baby (left) and both have fun checking mailbox.



### 'I saw her & just melted. That made it worth every fight along the way'

Brenda the baby. She decided to tell her story to a television news reporter — which she says only soured adoption officials more.

But a few months later, without explanation, California officials O.K.'d Brenda's adoption of Elizabeth!

"Brenda met all our criteria and was approved as an adoptive parent," said Eban Carrasco, her Texas caseworker. "But there are always

problems when you try to adopt a child from out of state. She fought the bureaucracy and won."

A joyful Brenda flew to California the first week of February to pick up her daughter.

"Elizabeth walked up to me and said, 'Mommy,'" recalled the delighted new mom. "I saw her and I just melted. That made it worth every fight along the way."

— JEFFREY RODACK



## Dedicated doctor is God's gift to America's little people

**DR. STEVEN KOPITS is giving America's 20,000 dwarfs a chance to walk tall.**

The Baltimore orthopedic surgeon has dedicated his career to saving the lives, and restructuring the bodies, of little people.

Kopits, 46, who works at Johns Hopkins Hospital, told GLOBE that he became interested in the problems of dwarfs when he realized that no one else appeared to care.

Now, he says, "tremendous strides" are being made in the genetic engineering he believes will be the eventual cure for the 33 conditions that cause dwarfism.

"We're still a long way off," he told GLOBE, "but there is hope of one day programming out genetic defects."

Until that day, Kopits uses complex surgery to reshape bone joints and backbones using casts, metal clamps, wires and rods.

And when his patients go home — after up to 900 hours of surgery over four or five years — Kopits makes house calls.

He travels thousands of miles a year, riding horse-drawn buggies in the Amish country of Pennsylvania and taking bush planes in the western Rockies.

"He's God's gift to little people," says Mary Alice Johnston, 34, a 3-ft. 10-in. genetic dwarf from Atlanta, Georgia.

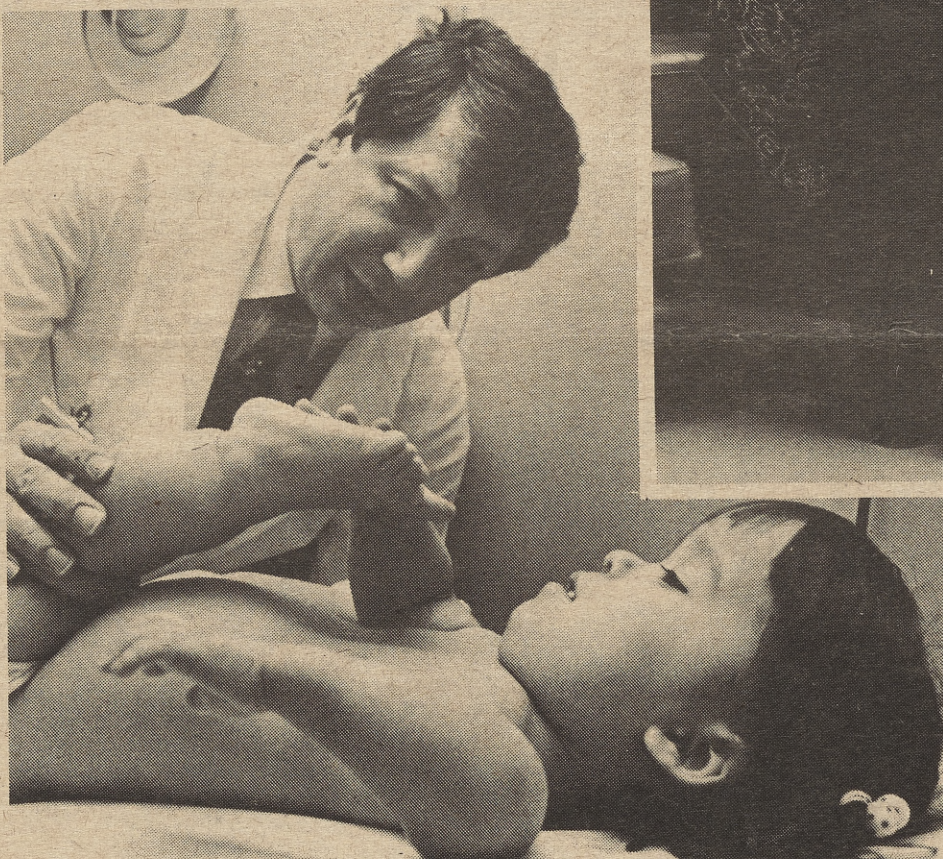
"The Lord provides someone for everyone, but until Dr. Kopits came along, there was no one for us little people."

Kopits' wife Edina, 36 — who says her husband "lives, breathes and, I honestly think, would die for his work" — remembers the case 10 years ago that sparked off Kopits' dedication.

"A four-year-old boy had fallen unconscious after being slapped by his father," she says.

Kopits explains: "The parents did not realize the little boy was a dwarf. The slap was not hard, but it had knocked the bones of the spine out of alignment and they had compressed the

# He turns dwarfs into GIANTS



KOPITS examines four-year-old Sheri Lacy of Rockville, Maryland, for signs of dwarfism.

nerves." Kopits says that most forms of dwarfism are still not spotted by doctors until it's too late.

Pituitary dwarfs, he explains, suffer from a mal-

function of the gland that supplies growth hormones.

They are scaled-down normal people, although there is a delay in physical and sexual growth.

The more serious cases are genetic dwarfs, who can end up bent and crippled for life.

"One cause is in the ball of the thigh bone that fits into the pelvis socket," Kopits explains. "It does not convert from cartilage into bone. Increasing body weight flattens that ball so it doesn't fit the socket."

If caught early enough, the weight on the immature bone structure can be relieved by

special casts. But there are other forms of genetic dwarfism, Kopits adds.

One "especially terrible" condition is called morquio.

"At six or seven years old, these children suddenly stop walking," he says. "Doctors try to fix their legs, but the real trouble is in the neck. They die of paralysis of the respiratory muscles — men in their 20s, women in their 30s."

One woman he saved is Phyllis Penton, 37, a 3-ft. 9-in. clerk-typist at Hyles Anderson College in Crown Point, Indiana. Her spine

KOPITS shows X-rays to Bobby and Angela Van Etten. "He's not just interested in us as medical curiosities," they say.

was collapsing, making her progressively shorter and cutting off the respiratory nerves in her spinal column.

"Dr. Kopits organized a team of doctors and they did special spinal surgery," says Penton. "They took bone from my leg and fused my back."

"If it wasn't for Dr. Kopits, I wouldn't be talking to you right now! He's a great man."

Kopits has performed more than 1,000 operations on 700 dwarfs.

One of his research assistants is Bobby Van Etten, 32, the 2-ft. 10-in. president of the 5,000-strong Little People of America.

"Dr. Kopits is the most dedicated man in the world in the cause of helping little people," says Van Etten, whose wife Angela is his same age — and height.

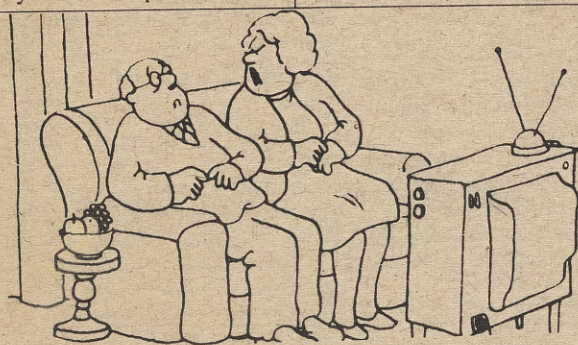
"Lots of doctors are interested in us as medical curiosities, but Dr. Kopits really cares."

## Jail that charges for bed and breakfast

**CRIMINALS** who serve weekends behind bars for minor offenses are being charged \$18 for a cell and \$3.75 for meals by Sheriff Charles Stewart, of Montgomery County, Indiana.

"I haven't heard any complaints," says Stewart who has billed two inmates so far. The first is a food-stamp swindler who paid for his weekends in advance. The second is a burglar who is currently behind in his payments.

This worries the sheriff, because his only threat to win payment is to send the offender to jail — for free.



"You like Dick Cavett? What are you, an intellectual?"





Gail Hull is co-leader of her daughter Dawn's Girl Scout troop 407 in Alief. Above, Dawn, 11, raises her hand at a meeting. She joins in the preparations for a school field day, planning a camping trip and just fooling around at the park where the troop meets. Gail Hull assists troop leader Amber Madden, below.



Photos by Sam C. Pierson, Jr.



# The little people

For those under 4 feet 10 inches, life presents some tall challenges

By Karen Kane, Chronicle staff

**G**ail Hull was about 8 years old when her mother told her she was a dwarfed child.

"I remember I was shocked," Gail recalls. She had realized that she was shorter than her peers, but she had assumed that she would grow. The news that she was dwarfed meant that she would not. She would always be a little person.

Still, her mother didn't shelter her. "My mother always pushed me," says Gail. "I took dance lessons just like my sister." She performed in recitals, even as soloist.

Hull had a "normal" childhood and adolescence. "I had my share of dates," she says. When





# This guy's a barrel of laughs <sup>93</sup>

But rodeo clown  
Charlie West —  
a/k/a "Too Tall"  
— is not a bozo

**D**ALY CITY — "Too Tall" knows all about adrenaline. You know, the "Hold-on-tight, we're-gonna-DIE" variety. It's like a drug.

"If I could bottle adrenaline," Too Tall muses, smearing makeup on his face, "I'd be a millionaire."

But he can't, so he isn't. Thus, Charlie "Too Tall" West must content himself with being the smallest rodeo clown and barrelman in the world.

His mission? To protect all the wayward cowboys of the world, about to be trampled by those one-ton, Tasmanian Devil-incarnate Brahman bulls.

And the fact that West is only 4 feet 6 inches tall and 120 pounds — "my legs stopped growing," he says — doesn't make his work any less dangerous. Bulls tend to be equal-opportunity attackers — they'll gore anything that moves.

Which is why West — who'll be performing at the 48th Grand National Rodeo at the Cow Palace, starting Friday through Nov. 1 — stays in his barrel.

"It's actually a pretty safe place to be," says the 29-year-old Utah native. "I've had bulls put their horns in the end of the barrel, but you just hope for the best and think good thoughts. I've hurt my back and been thrown around some, but nothing serious."

In his 10 years on the pro rodeo circuit, his most dicey moment, he says, came about five years ago in Oregon.

He was in the ring but out of his barrel, clowning around as usual — that is his job, after all — but this time, the

See BARREL, Page C4



Charlie "Too Tall" West is known in pro rodeo circles as the smallest barrelman in the world.

Story by Glenn Cunliffe;  
photos by John Green



All the world's a stage for a professional rodeo clown.



Putting on his "game face" before the show.



# Doctors S-T-R-E-T-C-H Dwarf an Amazing 12 Inches!

In an astonishing medical feat, a top orthopedic surgeon has stretched a dwarf a full 12 inches — making him 5 feet 3 and giving the once-ridiculed little man an exciting new life!

Peter Bunkus, 21, underwent a series of operations over four years at a special hospital in Russia — where his arms and legs were repeatedly broken, then placed in an apparatus that continuously stretched them.

"It was tough, but worth it," said Peter, of Essen, West Germany. "I'm more like a normal-size man now. People don't laugh at me anymore."

"When I was little my life was hell. I used to cry at night after the taunts from people on the street."

"Now I feel great! I'm the same height as the Emperor Napoleon. I can dance, date girls, go out shopping, play golf, reach up to elevator buttons — everything normal men can do — for the first time in my life."

The 4-foot-3 dwarf was 15 years old when his parents heard that a medical professor in Siberia had been successful in stretching several dwarfs. Peter's father Klaus checked with the Russian Health Ministry to see if his son could be helped.

"Several months later, we got permission for Peter to be the first patient in Europe to go to this special Russian hospital," said Klaus.

Peter flew to the hospital in Kurgan, Siberia, for the first stage of his growing process.

Prof. Gawriil Ilisarow, who was assisted by a team of doctors when he performed the surgery, explained, "The procedure of making dwarfs taller by lengthening their arms and legs is simple. The bones are broken and rejoined in a special way. Nature's own bone healing process forms calcium, marrow and other necessary tissue and cells to make a bridge between the two broken pieces."

"But as the bone is healing, I keep on drawing the

**Arm and Leg  
Bones Were  
Broken, Then  
Pulled Slightly  
Apart as the  
Tissue Healed**

two pieces apart, little by little, teasing the bone into extended growth."

In two separate five-hour operations, each of Peter's legs was broken in the shin area. Then pins were inserted through the two broken pieces and attached to an adjustable mechanical device around his leg. Four times daily this device was adjusted one-fourth of a millimeter, slowly lengthening the leg.

Peter returned twice more for months-long stays at the hospital, during which his upper legs and then his arms were broken. "I lengthened his legs the first time by eight inches, the second time by four inches, and finally his arms by almost four inches — all with new growth of bone which is as strong as the existing bone," Prof. Ilisarow said.

Peter was in such agony while at the hospital that he had to have painkillers every day. His mother stayed with him to comfort him throughout the ordeal.

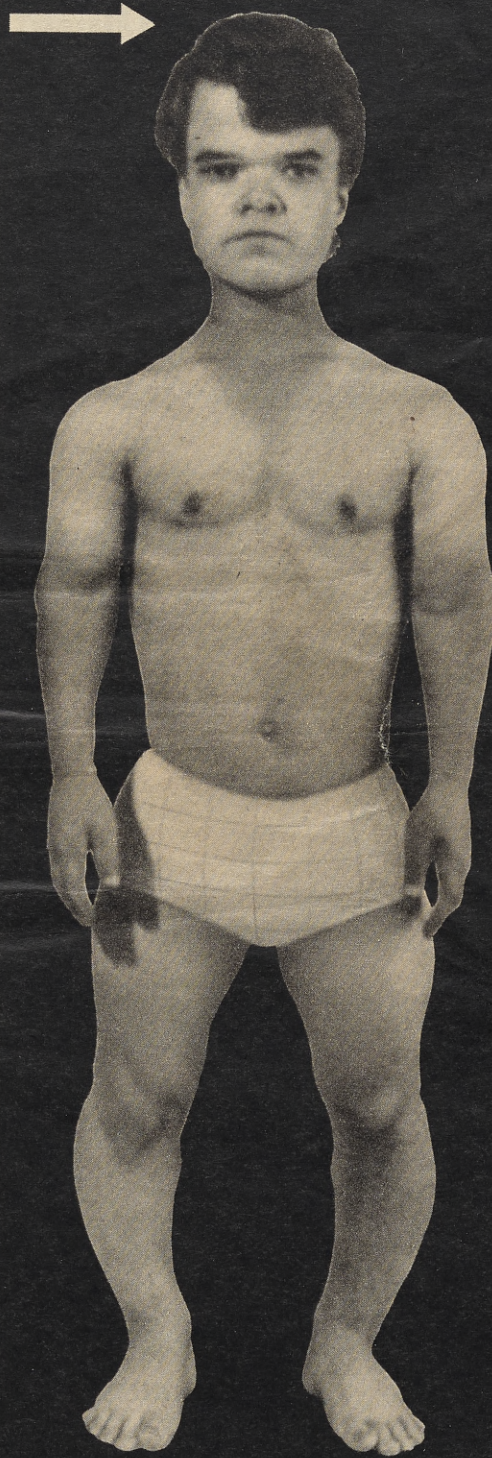
Said his mom: "Peter will be thankful to Prof. Ilisarow all his life. Being born a dwarf was a condemnation from hell. Now he can walk out with his head held high, living a more normal life."

"It was worth every moment he suffered for the years he has ahead of him as a real man."

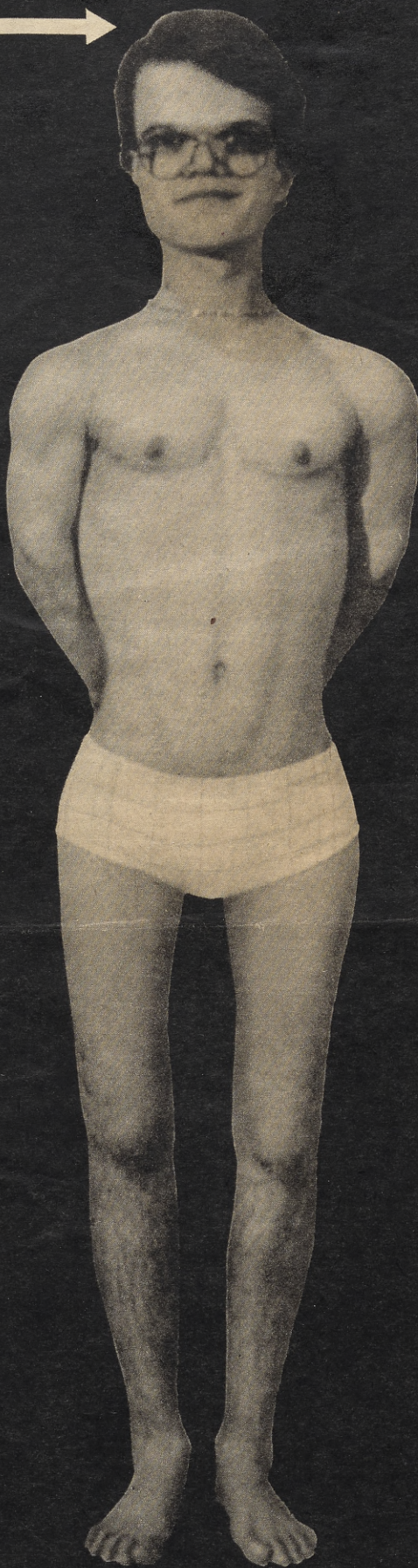
— PATRICK WILKINS

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4'3"



5'3"



DRAMATIC photos of Peter before (left) and after amazing series of operations.

## Barrel

Continued from Page C1

bull must have taken particular umbrage to one of his routines. West was a goner.

"When that happens," he said, "you try to zig and zag, and if that doesn't work, you roll up into a ball and let the bull come over you."

"Well, I curled up into a ball, and he just flew over me, like an airplane."

Another time, a bullfighter — they're in the arena with the clowns to protect the riders — got stuck by a bull's horn and thrown around some.

Net result? "A hundred and fifty stitches," said West.

And a lesson learned, at least for this rodeo clown.

"Yeah, quit screwing around outside the barrel," he said. "I can stay inside and have just as much fun. Some barrelmen will run out to fight the bull . . . but I'm better off inside the barrel. I can't outrun a bull."

Nowadays, on the rare occa-

sions when West does venture outside his barrel/fortress — which the cowboys can also use to escape a charging bull — he makes sure he has a head start.

"Sometimes the bull will see me, but I'm usually at the gate before they are."

Usually.

But being the World's Smallest Pro Rodeo Clown isn't exactly what West envisioned as a youngster growing up in rural Loomis, just up the road from Rocklin where his beloved Forty Niners train.

With his mother a rodeo secretary (and his father a train dispatcher), livestock was in his blood and rodeo dust in his lungs.

But when West stopped growing, he didn't head back to the ranch house — he merely made a detour. If he couldn't be the world's best cowboy, he'd be the world's smallest barrelman.

Today, West appears most comfortable with his stature. From his comic routines with his pet terrier and miniature horse, to his antics inside a barrel, his size is part of his identity.

"There's no one in the business that does what I do," he says. "The kids are my biggest fans, maybe 90 percent of my crowd."

"When they see me, they're curious. They say, 'What is that, a man in a kid's costume?' And

then they get to know me and say, 'Hey, he's cool, he's funny, he's neat.' I wanna go see him."

"The kids can relate to me — see me eye-to-eye, so to speak — and that means a lot to me. It puts a special feeling in me, and that's something no amount of money can buy."

Then there's the fact that West and his rodeo kinsmen (and women) are living life right out of the history books, pages of the Old West still flapping in the breeze.

"We're survivors," he said. "We're carrying on a tradition that dates back hundreds of years. A hundred years ago, they had rodeos out on the open range — just snub up a bronco and go, one ranch against another."

"It's something that's in my blood," he said. "I've been in rodeos for 15 years now, and I wouldn't trade in the memories I have or the friends I've made for anything."

Not even if it means risking life and unbroken limb to climb into an ring with a meaner-than-spit goring machine.

West paused a moment, savoring the smell of dust and hay in the morning air. The job, the life, of a rodeo clown, can be addicting.

"I don't know if we're adrenaline junkies, or what," he said. They're definitely not bozos.





**TALL ORDER:** Willie can't get past the door at many bars, let alone buy a drink.

## LITTLE BIG MAN

### He Looks 9 Years Old — But He's Really 27

Little Willie Canady doesn't have to worry about what he'll be when he grows up — because he never will. He's 27 but looks like he's only 8 or 9 years old!

The pint-size Texan stands only 4 feet 4 and weighs a featherlight 65 pounds — because of a pituitary gland problem that was discovered when he was 12.

Willie can't even get past the door at most bars, let alone buy a drink. And when he drives his car, he knows there's a good chance he'll be pulled over by a cop.

"I look like Gary Coleman's kid brother," says Willie, a computer operator in San Antonio. "When I'm driving, I get stopped all the time."

Willie has to pull the driver's seat all the way forward to reach the pedals of his 1979 Pontiac Firebird. To see out of the windshield, he has to sit on a pillow.

"I got stopped just a couple of days ago by a patrolman, and the first thing he asked was, 'Where's your mom and dad?'" Willie said.

"I said, 'Officer, I'm not as young as I look. I'm 27.' And he said, 'Sure you are, son. You just took your parents' car and drove off.'"

"Then I showed him a copy of my birth certificate, which I always carry, and my employee ID card. He kept looking at them and shaking his head."

"When he handed me back my ID, he said, 'Be careful.' He still had this look of disbelief on his face."

Willie recalled that when he went out to dinner recently with a 5-foot-7 girlfriend, he ordered drinks — and the waitress just grinned and brought him water.

"Later, when we ordered dinner, I asked for a steak, potato and salad — and they brought me a child's plate!"

But being small and look-

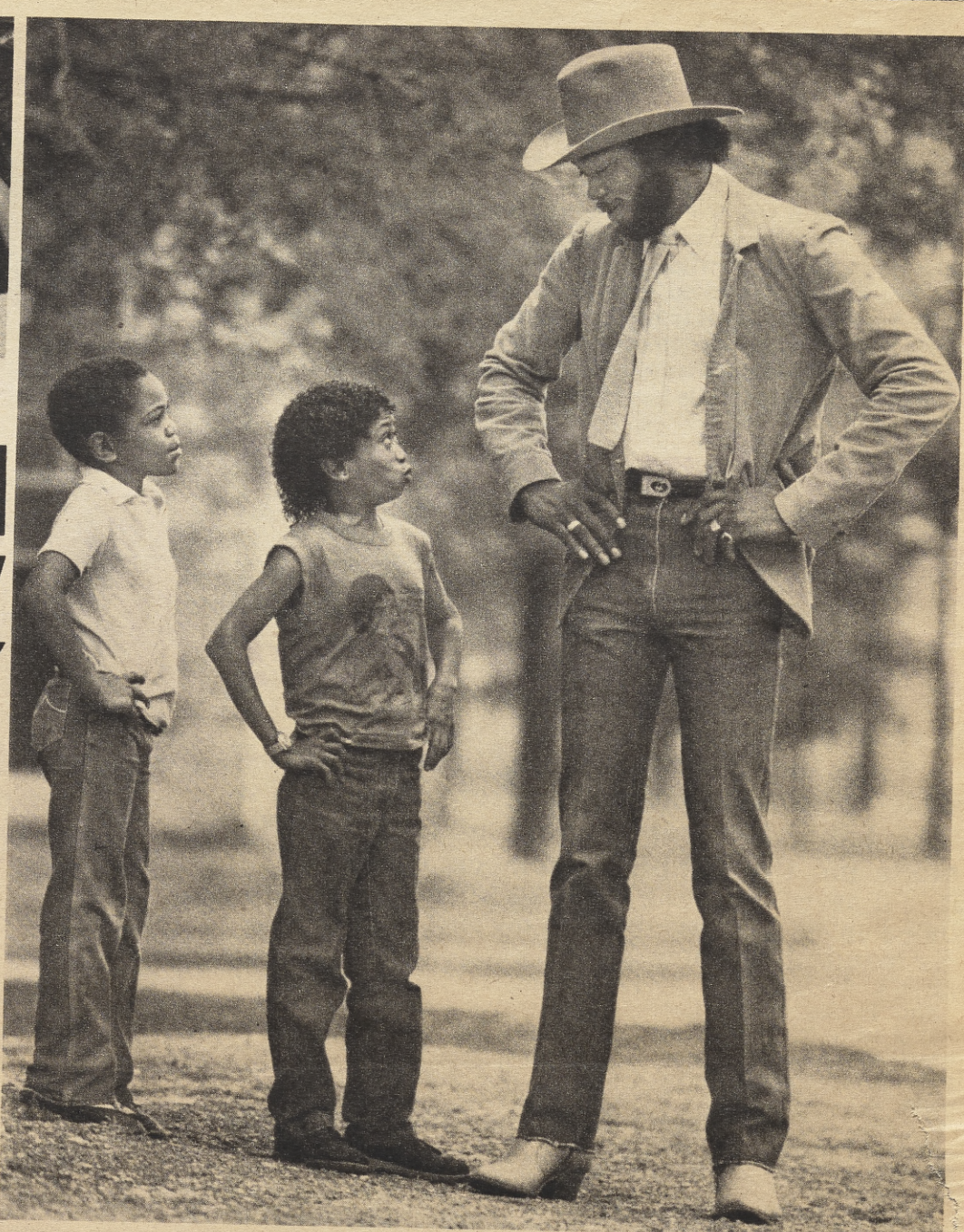
ing like a little boy does have its advantages, Willie added.

When he goes to the movies, he usually pays children's prices. He also shops in the children's department at clothing stores.

Willie lives with his mom, two brothers and a sister, all of whom are average size. He hopes eventually to marry and have children.

"It doesn't matter if the woman is my size or normal size," he added, "as long as she loves me for what I am."

— DENNIS D'ANTONIO



**PINT-SIZED** Willie looks up to a normal 27-year-old. Behind him is a normal-size 9-year-old boy.

## Love at First Bite

Many people are actually in love with food, say psychological experts.

Delicious doughnuts, sizzling steaks, fresh-baked bread, chocolate cake — these things can make their hearts pitter-patter with passion.

"When they know they're about to have their favorite dish, some people get a feeling of happiness and a high as if they're in love," psychiatrist Joanna Magda Polenz told The ENQUIRER.

But it's all because these people "have trouble with relationships, and so they give up on them and they turn to food," she said.

"Relationships are harder and make larger demands. Relationships are too painful and food is not. Food is available. Food is tasty. Food is sensual. It tickles one's taste buds," said Dr. Polenz, who is senior attending psychiatrist at the Phelps Memorial Hospital Center in North

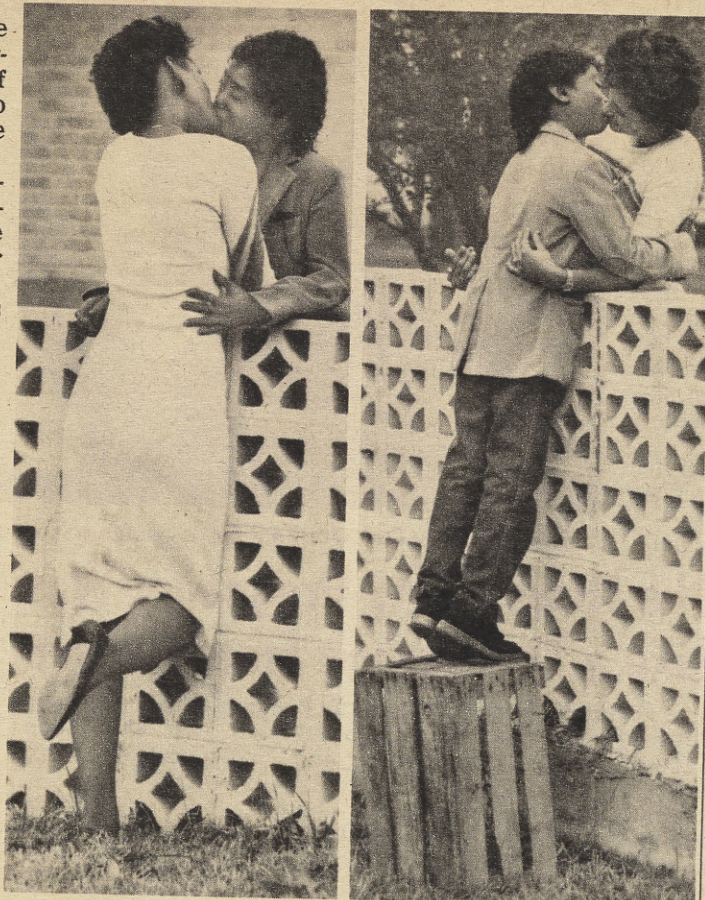
Tarrytown, N.Y. "These people allow themselves to get so dependent on food that it is synonymous with having fallen in love with food!"

"There's no doubt about it — many people fall in love with food."

A psychology professor agreed. "They're definitely in love when they pass by a bakery. You can see their eyes glaze over like a doughnut!" says Dr. Robert Fleer, assistant professor of psychology at Bergen Community College in Paramus, N.J.

"In fact, there are people who look forward to a meal as much as some people look forward to seeing their loved one."

— STEVE COZ April



**GIRLFRIEND** Carlene Brown gets a kiss from Willie but he needs a boost to do it!

## Little People of America Hear Zamore on Biz Ethics

Lionel Zamore, of 601 Brighton Court, Brighton Beach, was the guest speaker at the recent regional meeting of Little People of America, Inc., in Little Neck, N.Y., on the topic "Ethics in Business." Regional Director Ann Cleary presided at the all-day event, attended by more than fifty members representing New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Maryland.

Small groups of little people, dwarfs no taller than 4 feet 10 inches, who do "Think Big", started to meet in 1955. At Las Vegas, in 1960, over 100 attended a national convention at which a constitution was adopted, the U.S. divided into districts, and groundwork laid for incorporation as a nonprofit organization — Little People of America, Inc. The general purpose of LPA is to provide fellowship, interchange

of ideas, solutions to the unique problems of a little person, and moral support.

A thought by one of the members — "A small person can live in two worlds — a small world and a normal world. A person who finds happiness in both worlds has nothing to lose to society or himself. But a person who hides in one of the two worlds must always live with the fear of evasion or contact with the other world. For this person, there is no real truth — not even to himself."

Lionel Zamore is a faculty member of Kingsborough Community College, Manhattan Beach, and of Queensborough Community College, Bayside. He formerly served as Economist, U. S. Economic Mission to Panama, United States Department of State.



# Tom Thumb fought off savage poodle

**A** TWO-FOOT tall midget was terrified when he was attacked by a ferocious poodle — and dismayed that onlookers, including the Queen of England, laughed at the life-or-death struggle.

They thought that General Tom Thumb, the world's smallest man, was just putting on a comic show for their benefit.

The star attraction of P.T. Barnum's Geatest Show on Earth, the 16-pound general was appear-

— while queen & court cheered

ing in a command performance at Buckingham Palace before Queen Victoria in the mid-1800s.

After the performance, Tom bowed to the queen and started for the door when a poodle leaped from

By PHIL BRENNAN

the arms of its mistress and made a mad dash for the midget.

To Tom, the feisty little poodle was as menacing to him as a panther would be to a man of normal size.

Its lips were peeled back in a terrifying snarl.

General Thumb looked at the queen and her court, hoping to find help. All he saw were smiles in the audience, who thought he was putting on an act.

The dog stopped at Tom's feet, its ears folded



THE GENERAL fought off the attacking animal with his cane.

back, and growled threateningly.

Raising his cane Tom shouted at his attacker, ordering him away.

The command only angered the poodle, which sprung at him savagely. Tom quickly sidestepped and brought his cane crashing down on the dog's head.

Thumb heard the giggles behind him break into laughter. Angered, he raised the cane and struck the poodle a second blow.

Stunned, the poodle yelped and ran back to its mistress while Thumb ran for the door as the audience continued to laugh.

Thumb, whose real name was Charles S. Stretton, had the last laugh. Years later, a millionaire, he married a lovely midget bride and retired to live like a king!

## Man 4 Feet 7 Inches Tall Giant Of Group

DENVER (UPI) — Gary Hicks is 4 feet 7 1/2 inches tall and is a giant among some men and women, as long as they're fellow members of the Little People of America.

The 27-year-old mechanic moved from Phoenix to Denver five months ago and is trying to re-establish a local chapter of the Little People's organization. He said there has been little activity in the local group in the past 10 years and he wants to get it back on track again.

"I think it's important that the little people of this area get together for something like this," said Hicks. "We can talk about problems which we run into in every day life and how we can cope with them."

Hicks, who is president of the Denver chapter and assistant director for the national organization in Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona, thinks there may be at least 200 "little people" in the Denver area.

Membership in the organization is limited to anyone 4-feet10 and under. There is an auxiliary membership for parents of children suffering from dwarfism, and Hicks said it was important for fathers and mothers of the youngsters to understand some of the problems their children will experience.

"I'm the giant of little people," Hicks said. "I'm 4-7 1/2 and look down on most of the people at these meetings. There are some people who don't want to get involved in something like this, but I think it's important."

Hicks said the local chapter would sponsor a number of social events to help the people get acquainted and also promote fund-raisers to send delegates to various meetings involving dwarfism or to help some youngster get college educations.

He said the group also intended to fight efforts by a local school district to force children suffering from dwarfism into special education classes instead of the regular school program.

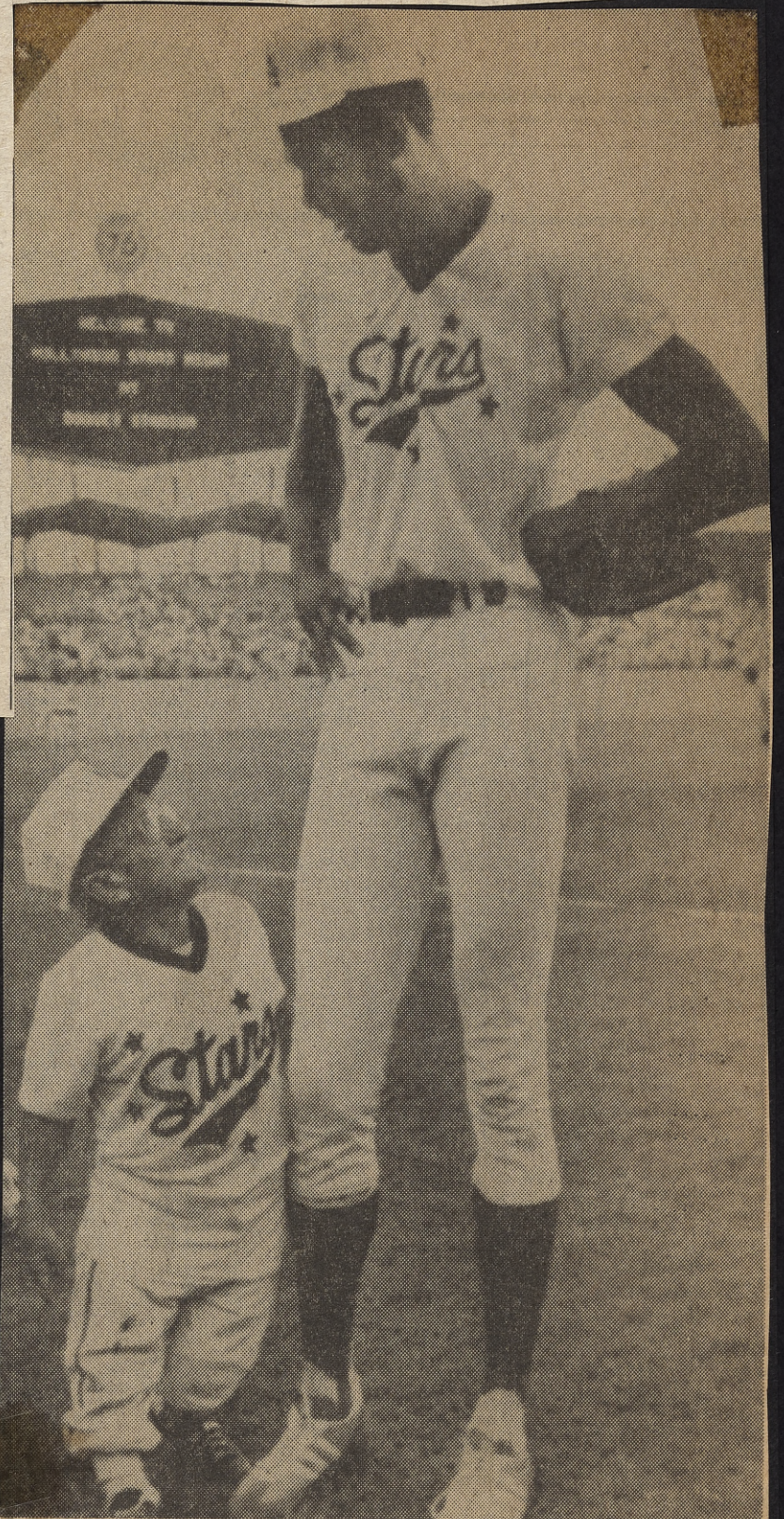
"They want to put them aside, and that's not right," Hicks said. "They didn't do that when I went to school (in Arizona)."

Hicks, who also hopes to organize a chapter in the Colorado Springs area, said the "Little People" groups not only help little people cope with their problems, but also can assist the parents of such persons.

"Sometimes it is difficult for average-height people who have a dwarf in the family," he said. "They don't know how to cope with it. They don't understand why it happened or the problems their children face. They can come to these meetings and learn what to expect when their children grow up."

Hicks said the organization also hoped to hold workshops on different problems such as "name calling" which children experience and how "little persons can survive in a big world." Among the problems to face, he said, is getting a job.

"It's hard for a little person to find a job sometimes," he explained. "Some people don't think a little person has the ability, just because he is small. Well, it isn't true."



AP Laserphoto

## All-Stars Big and Small

Actor Billy Barty sizes up Los Angeles Laker superstar Kareem Abdul-Jabbar prior to celebrity all-star game at Dodger Stadium. Barty acted as manager and Abdul-Jabbar played for the Hollywood Stars, who won the game.



LPA National Officers

Ruth Ricker, Recording Secretary; Mary Carter, Past President; Tim Deatherage, Treasurer; Robert Van Etten, President; Beth Loyless, Membership Coordinator; Bob Spector, (Proxy for Vice President Paul Jones).



District Directors

Front Row: Richard Crandall, Celeste Staples, Virginia Martin, Harry McDonald, David Gray (Proxy for Ginny Alford). Back Row: Pat Mowry, Pam Letscher, Mary Beth Ely, Ron Harris, Marge Carlisle, Mary Rasa, Cliff King.

1986





# PEOPLE

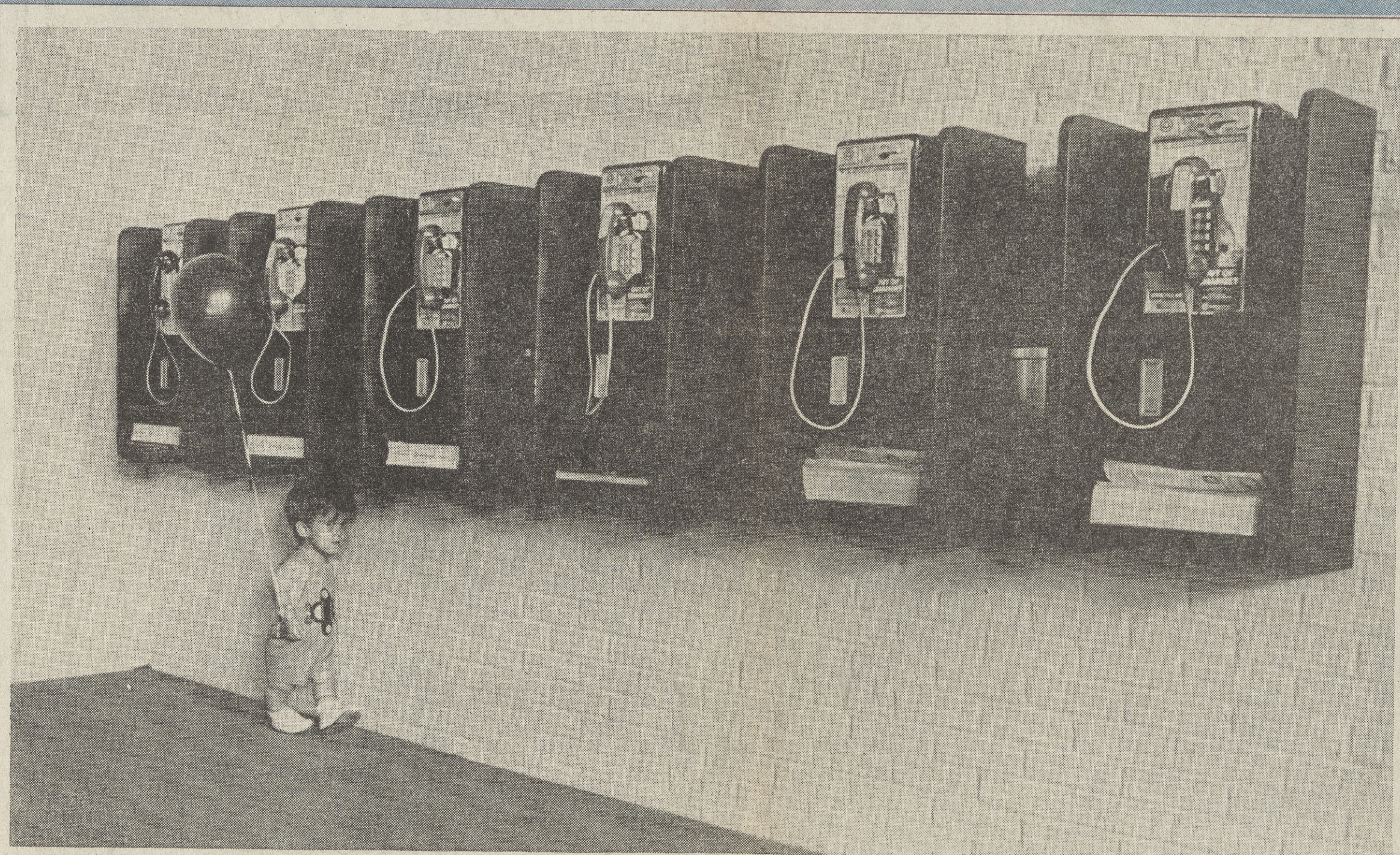
- ☐ Controversial professor . . . 3H
- ☐ Attic Salt. . . . . 7H
- ☐ Groundwork. . . . . 8H

H

SUNDAY ADVOCATE

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

June 28, 1987



Damian Breau, 3, amuses himself with a balloon and a bank of telephones in the hotel lobby



# LITTLE PEOPLE

**A convention  
like any other; a time  
to visit, offer help**

Story by Ed Cullen  
Photos by Guy Reynolds

**G**reg Cedotal never realized there were so many people like him until he answered an airline company's ad.

"The tallest six people and the shortest six got tickets to wherever they wanted to go," Cedotal remembers.

At 4 feet, 9 inches, Cedotal reasoned he was a shoe in.

"I battled my way through all the elbows," he says, "and came out in this group of people, all of them shorter than me. At first I thought, 'Why are all these children here?'"

Cedotal was standing in the midst of dwarfs — people just like him, only shorter.

Dwarfism occurs in about one in 40,000 births. Most "little people," the term preferred by the Little People of America, were born with a condition called achondroplasia. Characterized by short extremities, large head, sunken nose bridge, short fingers and some degree of spinal curvature, nine out of 10 achondroplastic dwarfs have average-size parents.

"I guess I always knew I was little," says Carole Henley, in Baton Rouge for a district LPA meeting. Henley stands 4 feet, 1 inch. "My mother knew from the very first."

Henley attended her first meeting of Little People when she was 9.

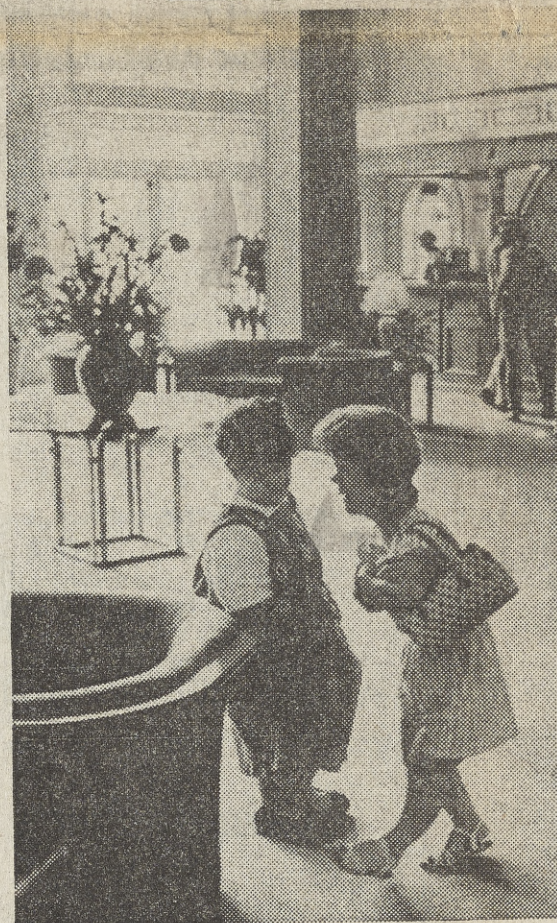
"It was a pool party," she says. "Some of the people were crippled, fat. I said, 'Mommy, am I going to be like that?'"

Henley's mother said, "No, you're just going to be short."

"I said, 'OK, that's cool.'"

Henley grew up in New Jersey. She attended the Fashion Institute in New York for two years before taking a job in the fashion business in California.

SEE Little, 2H



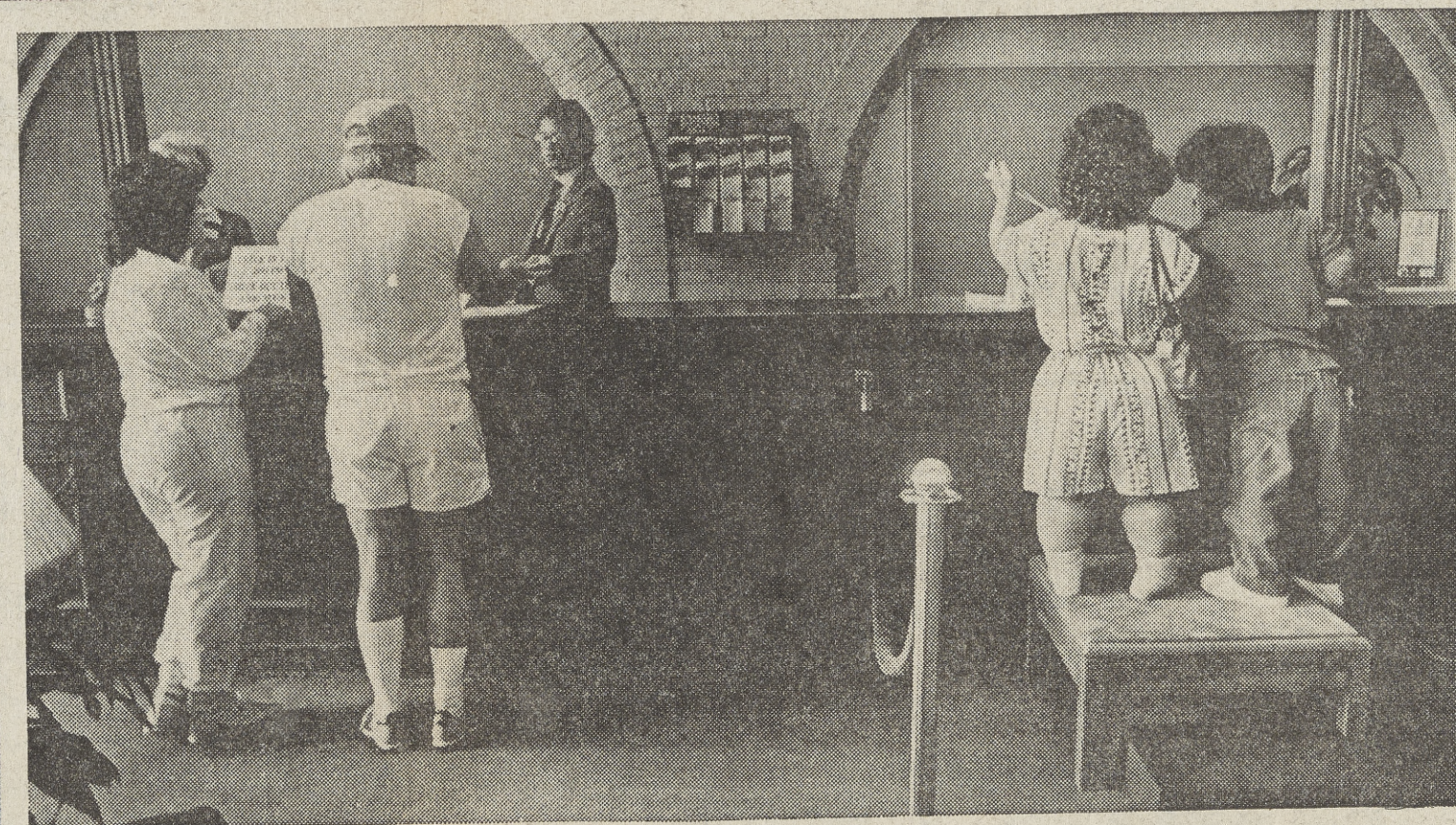
Lois Lamb, left, and Carole Henley

I think we'd rather have an achon child. It may be selfish, but it would be easier on us. By the time an average-size child was a teenager, he'd be looking down on his father.

**Joe Henley**



Lee Kitchens, left, and Joe Henley on an outing to Catfish Town



A couple of little people check into the Ramada Inn



# Little

CONTINUED FROM 1H

Chances are you have seen Henley at the movies.

"I was an Ewok in 'Return of the Jedi,'" she says brightly.

"Remember when the Ewoks took over the Walker? Remember the Ewok on top of the Walker, the one who came in through the window? That was me."

Carole, 29, met Joe Henley Jr., 28, of New Orleans at a convention of Little People in Puerto Vallarta last summer.

For Joe Henley, it was love at first sight.

"The characteristics of her achondroplasia I find very attractive," Henley says.

Each being achondroplastic, the Henleys' chances of having an achon child are one chance in two. Their chances of having an average child are one in four, and their chances of having a double dominant child are one in four. Double dominant children usually die.

The Henleys are trying to decide whether or not to have a child.

"I think we'd rather have an achon child," Joe Henley says. "It may be selfish, but it would be easier on us. By the time an average-size child was a teen-ager, he'd be looking down on his father. I'd hope we could teach him to love anyone, no matter what they looked like."

"I think he thinks about that more than I do," Carole Henley says. "It doesn't matter to me, as long as the child is healthy."

"I was around 50 or 60 little people at a district meeting in New Orleans in 1976," Joe Henley says. "I was 17. I was frightened. I didn't want to accept that I was like them. I'd grown up with average-size people and had been sheltered by them."

A lot of Henley's friends were football players, first at Bonabel High and, later, at the University of Alabama. Henley was Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant's equipment manager.

"Coach Bryant treated me like everyone else," Henley says.

The Henleys work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in New Orleans. Cedotal, who lives in Gonzales, is a mechanical packing specialist in Baton Rouge. Lois Lamb of Dallas is a kindergarten teacher. Her ex-husband,



Henleys ponder food selection

**I didn't want to accept that I was like them. I'd grown up with average-size people and had been sheltered by them**

— Joe Henley

a little person, is a public defender in Dallas. Lee Kitchens teaches industrial engineering at Texas Tech.

Kitchens sees a woman in the lobby of the Ramada Inn he met at a convention of little people in Des Moines in 1963.

"A few more gray hairs," the woman says.

Kitchens, 57, a pilot, is a former national LPA president. Long ago, he began insisting on his rights as a citizen.

The commissioners where Kitchens voted refused to make allowances for handicapped persons. Kitchens made an official complaint. The next election, the county still had done nothing to remove barriers. Kitchens, backed by Texas law, had the voting place closed early the morning of election day.

## CUSTOM WORK ROOM

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292-1996

## 'Wizard' role tailor-made for Rappaport

By Jerry Buck

AP television writer

LOS ANGELES — English actor David Rappaport, who stands just 3-feet-11, was wary when he was first asked to star in an American television series, which was created just for him.

A year ago, during a publicity tour of this country for "The Bride," a movie based on the Frankenstein legend, Rappaport was approached by 20th Century-Fox Television for the lead role in "The Wizard."

"I wasn't really interested," recalls Rappaport, who had starred in his own hit series in England, "Tiz Waz." English series tend to run for only six or so episodes and he was worried about "horror stories" of American actors "getting trapped in series."

"If it had been simply a show about a small guy who does this or that, I wouldn't have been interested," he says. "But this was created for me. I had a lot of input. Still, I was pretty nervous about accepting a series."

"I didn't want to get locked into something I might not like. I talked to the writers and they put a lot of me into the part. For instance, I've been a drummer since I was 13. They put that in, where he retires to a room to play the drum and think. I do that. It's a form of loud meditation."

Rappaport stars as Simon McKay, a diminutive whiz whose inventive genius was first applied to the toy business. But

his ideas were so revolutionary they quickly came to the attention of Washington and he was put to work coming up with devices to preserve civilization as we know it, as the saying goes.

Doug Barr also stars in the CBS series as a government agent who has been assigned to protect McKay. Fran Ryan is his housekeeper and Roy Dotrice is the evil Troyan, the Wizard's nemesis.

CBS took the show off the air temporarily, but it is now back on Tuesday nights.

"I used to say this show was 50 percent fact and 50 percent fiction," Rappaport says. "Now, I don't know what's what. The look of the thing, the way I dress is very personal to me, as well as the preoccupation with electronics. I'm very keen to try the new gadgets they come up with for the show. Some are real gadgets that already exist and some are those that simply haven't been invented yet."

"But I think the real secret of this show is the heart. The real human values. The hero is powerful, but he's also vulnerable. The message of the show is that you can overcome things through non-violence. My size works on many levels. I was a teacher before I became an actor. Children identify with someone on their level. I'm like a small Harrison Ford. Children say, 'If the Wizard can do it, I can do it.'"

He notes that in one show the Wizard built a holographic puppet for a handi-

capped dancer. She could operate it with a keyboard. In another show he made a mechanical parrot.

"The company that builds some of these models also makes robotics for handicapped people," he says. "We're doing fiction and here's fact just beyond what we're doing."

Rappaport was born in London and at the age of 7 just "stopped growing." Even as a child he had a yen to be an entertainer, but his parents insisted he get a good education first. He studied psychology at Bristol University, where he played in rock and jazz bands and participated in theatrical activities.

He took time out for an occasional television production. Finally, he gave in to his desire to be an actor and accepted a part in Ken Campbell's eight-hour science-fiction play "Illuminatus." Many more stage and television productions followed, including a two-year stint with his own series, "Tiz Waz."

"The series was live, which is pretty scary, but it's good training because it prepares you for anything," he says. "It was basically a two-hour, anything-can-happen show. I planned to do it for only a few weeks, but my character took off and became a national figure."

Rappaport, who is separated, has a 10-year-old normal-sized son named Joe. "He comes up with ideas for some good inventions that we use," says his dad.

"Boy, the people who didn't get to vote were sure mad," Kitchens says.

"It's amazing some of the reactions," says Diane Newsom.

John Newsom, Diane's husband, is average size. Diane's sister, Grace Jarreau, is a little person. The Newsom's daughter, Dana, is a little person.

"They see me and they say, 'Look, a little person,'" Newsom says. "Then, they see Grace and Dana. It blows their minds."

"People think John's a relative or someone who's been kind enough to take me some place," Newsom laughs.

The Newsoms, who grew up together in Rougon, have been married 20 years.

"People ask, 'How do you cook?'" Newsom says.

"I say, 'I cook. That's how I cook.'"

Kitchens attended one of the early LPA meetings. The organization was founded in 1957 by little person and actor Billy Barty.

"There were very few professionals," Kitchens says. "Most weren't well-dressed. Transportation was a real problem."

In the 30 years since the founding of LPA by Barty, the organization has tried to show average-size people that little people are just people — only short.

Growing up in a small town made it easier, Diane Newsom says.

"You knew all the teachers. I had my little footstool. People called me little, but I wasn't treated little."

Alain Cracco is an orthopedic surgeon on Tulane Medical School's clinical staff. Cracco has performed surgery on some of the little people at the Baton Rouge meeting. Cracco took a personal interest in the medical problems of little people after his daughter, Nicole, was born an achondroplastic dwarf. Cracco and his wife are average-size.

Reading the medical literature on dwarfism from countries around the world, Cracco found entire paragraphs that were identical.

"Little new had been done in the field," he says.

Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore has worked with little people to help alleviate some of their medical problems. A growth hormone extracted from human pituitary glands has been successfully used to promote growth in hypopituitary dwarfs.

Hypopituitary dwarfs are what average-size people know as "midgets." Little people think the word "midget" demeaning, calling to mind a time when the public associated persons of short stature only with circus performers and sideshow freaks.

Cracco recommends surgery only in cases where some function results. Little people may expect normal life spans but face, too, a raft of orthopedic problems, he says.

"Sometimes the cure is worse than the disease," Cracco says.

"You are operating in a very compact area," he says. "Where you are normally operating in an area this size (larger than a quarter) in the lumbar area of the cervical canal, with an achondroplastic you are talking about this size (smaller than a dime) and you must insert an instrument, as well."

While there are surgical procedures for the spinal curvature affecting many dwarfs, surgery always means a trade off, Cracco said.

Cracco believes genetic engineering holds the best hope in the future. He doesn't approve of a surgical/mechanical procedure that has been publicized in Europe for extending the length of the legs.

For the sake of gaining a few inches, a little person undergoes considerable pain and is left with a body even more out of kilter, Cracco says.

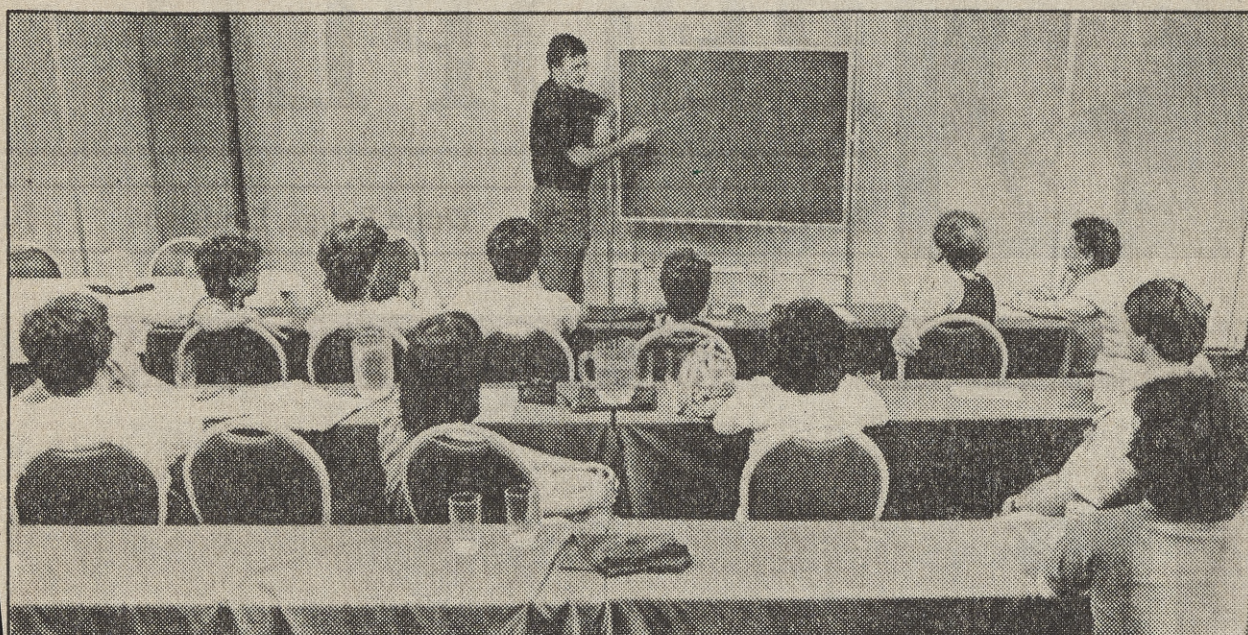
Kitchens traveled to Rome to see first hand the result of the leg-lengthening procedure.

"You're still a little person," Kitchens says. "Three, four, five inches don't make that much difference. It's painful. Above everything else . . . you talk about funny looking!"





Joe and Carole Henley dress for an evening dance



GUY REYNOLDS MORNING ADVOCATE

Conventioners gather to listen to Dr. Alain Cracco



## DWARFISM THROUGH THE EYES OF A SIBLING

People in the world should accept dwarfs and other people with differences just as any average person walking down the street.

By having a brother who is a dwarf, I've undergone many interesting changes in the way I perceive people and situations.

When my brother, Brent, was born and he was diagnosed as a dwarf, my mother contacted a group called the Little People of America. LPA is a group for short statured people and their families. When we went to one of the meetings, it was one of the first times that any of us had ever seen a dwarf. That made me and the rest of my family a little uncomfortable. The main reason for feeling this way was I wasn't used to the way that little people are proportioned. Most dwarfs' torsos are average sized, but their arms and legs are very short. After I began to talk with dwarfs and now that I have known dwarfs for two years, I feel just as comfortable around them as I do around average sized people.

Knowing dwarfs has also helped me with the way I act with others who have different physical or mental problems. It seems I have become more sensitive about others that are different. I have found that people are nervous and frightened by conditions they don't understand, but they can change just as I have. When I used to be unaccustomed to the differences I would be like any other person and stare or act very uncomfortable around dwarfs. Since I've met the people in LPA I have tried to not make the difference more important than the person. In reality, no two people are the same, and differences can make the world more interesting.

Now that my brother is getting older and I know more dwarfs I've learned to change some of the wording I used to use. For example, I now use average instead of normal. Older or younger not bigger or smaller because I know my brother isn't going to get very big. I've also stopped using derogatory terms such as munchkin, pee wee, shrimp and short stuff. Before I had a dwarfed brother I would use these terms and not think about hurting people's feelings, now I do. For instance, it's very easy to slip and then feel very awkward. When my friends do they feel embarrassed.

During the two and a half years my brother has been alive I've seen and heard many different reactions from different people about my brother. Most don't know he is a dwarf when they see him. Some of the people are pros at opening their mouths and inserting their feet. They say and do the dumbest things. One day there was a woman in a car who stopped in the middle of a parking lot and told my mother what a fat little boy she had. My mother just smiled and ignored it.

Other times people are just plain ignorant. Many people

think Brent is going to be so big when he "grows up" because his arms and legs look muscular since he has extra skin and muscle on a shorter bone. Others think he is very young because he is very small until they hear his large vocabulary. Some people are very interested with Brent and ask questions without being rude, then we are more apt to explain things to them.

When I first found out that my brother was a dwarf, it was very hard for me to accept it, but after I stopped feeling sorry for myself and for him I realized that he was very healthy and smart and just needed a lot of encouragement. Now that I have accepted his condition he has helped me as much as I am trying to help him.

I just hope more people can look at people and not their differences. I don't want my brother to grow up with people who are rude and ignorant and treat him as if he has just come out of the twilight zone or as if he should be in a circus. I want them to treat him and others like they should be treated, like human beings. All people just need to be given a chance. It is simply a matter of opening your eyes and your mind. Different is not always bad.

by: Sarah McDonald-Harris  
1986



## MINI-ME GROOVING WITH 'SHAGADELIC' STRIPPER



**VERNE & TINA**  
are all smiles at  
the "Austin Pow-  
ers" premiere.



Verne as Mini-Me

"Yeah, Baby!"

Mini-Me is making a BIG splash with a Dallas stripper.

The 32-inch sensation from the summer smash, "Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me," is stepping out with X-rated actress Tina Kirkpatrick — named Adult Entertainer of the Year for her sizzling performance in a topless version of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

At 5-foot-6, "shagadelic" Tina towers over the diminutive Austin Powers villain, whose real name is Verne Troyer.

Luscious Tina, who performs as Jordan Jarrelle, accompanied Verne to the world premiere of the spy-spoof mega-hit.

The pair have been grooving for the last four years.

"We go out to movies, dinner, have cookouts and a lot of fun," Tina told The ENQUIRER in an exclusive interview.

Tina, whose other titles include, "Best Chest in the West," says she and Verne are "just good friends."

"We get together whenever possible, but I don't believe he has ever come to see me perform."

Verne, 30, became one of the summer's biggest movie stars for his portrayal of "Dr. Evil's" 1/8-size clone. Tina has been in movies, too. Her Web site lists her film credits, including the adult flick, "Penthouse Forbidden Fantasies."

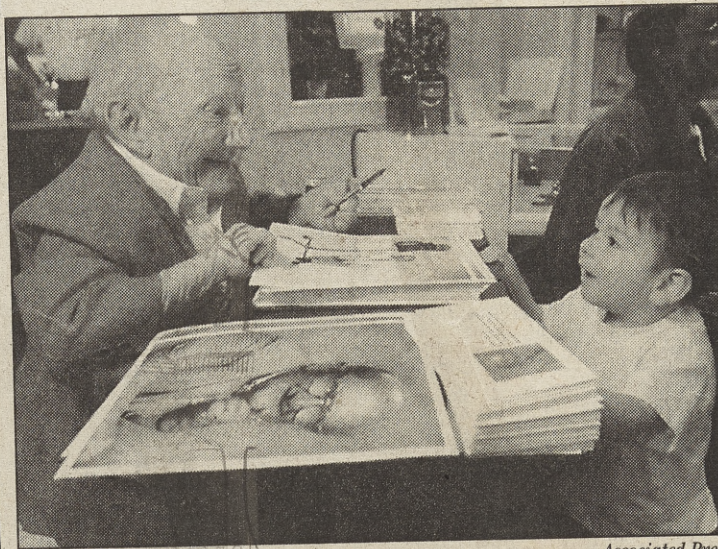
The 29-year-old brunette has modeled in the skin magazines Cheri, Fox, Gent, Showgirls and Swank.

Like Tina, Mini-Me's manager John Symington downsizes "shag-gestions" that Verne and Tina are an item, but adds: "They have a lot of fun together."

As for Tina, her stripping days are behind her, she said.

"I'm planning to give up dancing and go into the tanning industry."

### TELEVISION



Associated Press

**BIG STAR:** Actor Billy Barty signs an autograph for 2-year-old D.J. Holland during an appearance Sunday in Burbank. Barty, who starred in "The Wizard of Oz" and "Willow," is campaigning to raise awareness about the issues surrounding little people.

## Actor advocates for little people

BURBANK (AP) — Billy Barty stands 3-foot-10 and weighs just 86 pounds, but that never stopped him from playing college football and basketball or sharing screen time with the likes of Elvis Presley and Chevy Chase.

And he says it won't stop him from being an effective advocate for little people.

"The general public thinks all little people are in circuses or sideshows," Barty said. "We have doctors, nurses, just about every field covered."

"But there are still those people out there," he said, referring to bigots.

The 74-year-old actor, who has appeared in more than 200 TV shows and movies, signed autographs Sunday at a jewelry store to raise money for the Billy Barty Foundation, a nonprofit organization that helps little people integrate with society.

Not so long ago, he says, parents of dwarfs — the medical term for people less than 5 feet tall — would hide their children out of shame. He also remembers a time when authorities wanted to put little people in schools for the mentally challenged.

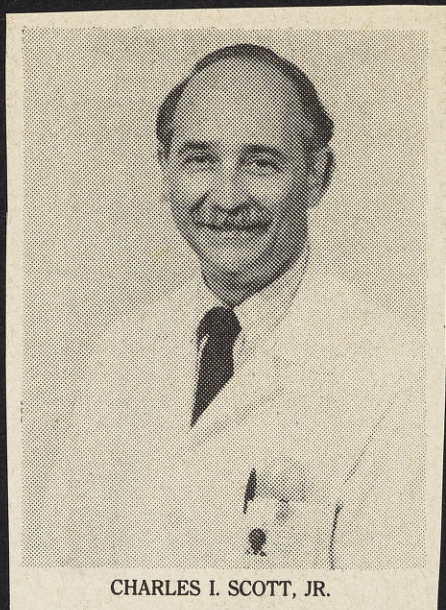
"That was 100 percent wrong," Barty said as he signed an autograph for 11-year-old Chris Robles.

The boy didn't recognize Barty from any movie — until his mother told him he played a wizard in the movie "Willow."

"Of course he does," Barty told the boy. "You remember me."

He is perhaps the most recognizable diminutive actor around after playing a number of outrageous characters in his career. Just two samples: a tongue-in-cheek stint as a German spy in "Under the Rainbow" with Chevy Chase, and as a bachelor with an overactive libido in "Foul Play."

Barty appeared in his first Hollywood feature in 1927 at the age of 3. Since then, he



CHARLES I. SCOTT, JR.



# National Report

The New York Times



Loew's



Monica Almeida/The New York Times

Margaret Pellegrini, who played 1 of the 120 or so Munchkins who appeared with Judy Garland in "The Wizard of Oz," posed with fans at the Culver Hotel, where many of the midgits stayed during filming in 1938 and where Mrs. Pellegrini and five fellow Munchkins gathered again.

## Reunion of Munchkins Revives Magic of Making 'Oz'

By TODD S. PURDUM

CULVER CITY, Calif., Nov. 1 — She steps off the bus, no bigger than a minute in her dirndl dress, flower-pot hat and flame-red fingernail polish, ready to greet her fans. She takes a seat at the end of a long table, the better to pose for the pictures she knows will come. She has a pint-sized place in Hollywood history and is proud to say so.

Today, Margaret Pellegrini is a 74-year-old great-grandmother from suburban Phoenix. But 59 years ago this month, as a 3-foot-4-inch teenager known as Popcorn, she arrived at the Culver Hotel here to take a job at the M-G-M Studios just down the street, playing 1 of the 120 or so Munchkins in "The Wizard of Oz."

"It was exciting to be around so many little people," said Mrs. Pellegrini, who played one of the Munchkin sleepyheads ("Rub your eyes/Get out of bed/Let them know the Wicked Witch is dead!") who greeted Judy Garland's Dorothy. "I was

from a small town in Alabama, and I had never seen so many before."

This weekend, Mrs. Pellegrini and five of her fellow Munchkins converged once more on the lobby of the Culver Hotel, where many of them stayed during their six weeks of rehearsals and filming in the fall of 1938, for a three-day "Munchkin Rendezvous" of fans and collectors sponsored by a St. Louis mail-order memorabilia business called Beyond the Rainbow. The hardest of 14 surviving Munchkins, they are the last living links to a beloved movie whose big stars are all dead.

No matter that the old M-G-M sound stages now belong to Sony, or that David O. Selznick's onetime studios just across the way no longer rumble with the cannons of "Gone With the Wind." No matter that the Culver Hotel is no longer the kind of place where Joan Crawford once lived but is scrambling to reopen after a string of failed owners and attempts at renovation. No matter

A gathering that recalls a special role and time in a beloved movie.

that most of these Munchkins are pushing 80. When the old gang gathered again on Thursday night to sign \$5 autographs, there was a poignant magic in the air.

"The opportunities are not going to be here much longer," said Stephen Cox, who wrote "The Munchkins of Oz" (Cumberland House, 1996) after setting out in 1988 to record the stories of as many of the Munchkins as he could find on the eve of the film's 50th anniversary. "These people are getting older; it's like Titanic survivors."

For Mickey Carroll, a 78-year-old former vaudevillian who played a Munchkin soldier and one of the fiddlers who sent Dorothy skipping down the yellow brick road, "it's a living fantasy." Now retired from running his family's tombstone-carving business in St. Louis, he is a regular at Munchkin reunions around the country and would not have missed this one for the world. "This picture," Mr. Carroll said, "is loved by millions."

The roughly 120 midgits collected for the movie, many of them from the celebrated troupe of Leo Singer, the Austrian impresario billed in the credits, probably amounted to the largest such gathering ever assembled and one unlikely ever to be equaled, in part because of advances in medical treatment that have made midgits extremely rare.

Unlike dwarfs, whose small stature is often caused by defective cartilage or bone growth and is usually genetically transferred, midgits' bodies are proportionately correct miniatures caused by a malfunction of the pituitary gland, which can often be corrected with hormonal treatments.

The gathering of so many little people spawned tall tales of misbehavior, some of them spun late in her life by Judy Garland herself in a bibulous appearance on Jack Paar's television show, in which she dismissed the Munchkins as "little drunks," one of whom, "about two inches high," had asked her for a date. A 1981 film flop, "Under the Rainbow" starring Chevy Chase, was a slapstick spy comedy set in the Culver Hotel and portrayed the Munchkins as trashing the place.

"That's a lot of hooley," said Jerry Maren, 77, who played the smirking bad-boy in the middle of the Lollipop Guild and is perhaps the best known of the ex-Munchkins, having spent a long career playing parts in movies and commercials, from Buster Brown to Little Oscar, the Oscar Mayer hot-dog man.

"She was higher than a kite and didn't know what she was saying," Mr. Maren said. "How the hell could we be acting up? We were making \$50 a week and working six days a week starting at 6 o'clock in the morning."

Mr. Carroll added, referring to Judy Garland's daughter Liza Minnelli, "Even Liza said, 'Mama always made things up to make a better story.'"

Still, there were some adventures. Mrs. Pellegrini recalls a morning just before Christmas when her roommate's ex-husband burst into their room at the Culver brandishing a knife, forcing them to decamp to another hotel. She has happier memories of piling into a car for a New Year's excursion to Tijuana when the filming was done.

Ruth Duccini, 79, had just graduated from high school in Minnesota when she was hired for the movie.

"You can't imagine how exciting it was," she said. "I think what makes that scene so great is the fun we were all having."

This reunion also included Clarence Swensen, 79, who had come from Austin, Tex., to be a Munchkin soldier. "It was fantastic," he said.

Mrs. Pellegrini, who brought her 10-year-old great-granddaughter, Cheryl Pellegrini, to help her autograph sepia-toned photographs of her younger self peeking out from the bushes at Judy Garland, was still going strong Thursday night, long after Cheryl had put her head down on the table and gone to sleep.

"It's a fairy tale — it's fantastic," she said, to no disagreement from the faithful. "There will never be another movie like it."